A Marriage to India

Frieda Hauswirth Das

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A painter, writer, and illustrator, *Frieda Hauswirth Das* (1886-1974) spent her career in Orissa (India) and Northern California. She was born in Switzerland and studied there at Universities in Bern and Zurich and then moved to California to study at Stanford University. She graduated in 1910 and then took art lessons from Gottardo Piazzoni and classes at the California School of Fine Art in San Francisco.

At Berkeley she met *Sarangadhar Das*, a student from Orissa (India), and they married and moved to Orissa. There she wrote books including *A Marriage to India*, *Purdah* and *The Status of Indian Women*. By late 1930, she was back in California, where she lived in Berkeley. She had also held exhibitions of her paintings at Sanfransisco Art Association, the Brooklyn Museum and the Paris Salon.

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A MARRIAGE TO INDIA

Frieda Hauswirth Das
(Mrs. Sarangadhar Das)

Prafulla

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CONTENTS

Foreword	7
Chapater one	11
Chapater two	26
Chapater three	39
Chapater four	45
Chapater five	56
Chapater six	79
Chapater seven	92
Chapater eight	107
Chapater nine	115
Chapater ten	125
Chapater eleven	132
Chapater twelve	156
Chapater thirteen	180
Chapater fourteen	200
Chapater fifteen	219
Chapater sixteen	241
Chapater seventeen	253
Chapater eighteen	266
Glossary	277

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Foreword

Books on India written by Westerners are legion. But while there is a flood of western writing about some regions, like Bengal, and understandably so thanks to Calcutta being the first capital of British India, there is only a trickle of such writing on or about Orissa, Bengal's southern neighbour. What writing there is that has issued out of the Western imagination on unsung places such as Orissa needs to be retrieved. And within that evidently small corpus the accent must clearly fall on books which have adopted subject positions different from the ones authorized by the Orientalist practices of representation. One such book about Orissa is European-American woman writer and painter Frieda Hauswirth's semi-autobiographical, semi-fictional *A Marriage to India*. The book goes against the imperial grain by not placing its object or subject under Western scrutiny. As such, the reprint of *A Marriage to India*, originally published in 1930 and now out of print and out of reach of Indian readers, is a move in the right direction. It will introduce to present-day Indian readers a very fine book and will restore the dimension of internal critique that is often conspicuous by its absence in the colonialist corpus.

The title of the book, masking the fact that it is about Orissa, is obviously a concession to the Western reader who is familiar with the grand récit of India . But the book is about Orissa and about a different Orissa where the author felt the "brewing of social ferment" (Ch. 5). Thus the Orissa that enters the Western imagination through this book is not primarily a place of revenue administration but a place of culture and daily living. It is not, therefore, a book about Orissa "inscribed", in Kate Teltscher's apt phrasing. As an empathic outsider married into India and into Orissa at a time when such inter-racial marriages were distinctly risqué, Frieda Hauswirth "subscribes" to an Indian and Orissan ethos. She is an outsider who has become an insider, but without losing her outsider's vantage point.

This note is struck early on in the book as soon as Frieda lands on the shores of India: "I had come in search of an India with age-old traditions of spiritual calm and achievement, of great unselfish devotions, of deep indifference to worldly success, of smilingly tolerant aversion to the mad

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Western rush towards nowhere. But of this India I found no trace in my first few weeks in Bombay" (Ch. 1). (No Naipaulian hurry or Katherine Mayo-like brusqueness to write India off here, only an honest reckoning of that which does not jell with the real, contemporary India. Frieda's passage is comparable to that of Mrs. Moore and Miss Adela Quested in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). There is no negative identification at work for them in their relationship with India. Frieda herself can be said to have Adela's youthful and romantic ardour and Mrs. Moore's age-old wisdom.) From her vantage point she offers something like a critical insider's perspective on the ways in which Orissa, reeling under poverty, neglect, backwardness and sex and caste restrictions in the 1920s, fails to measure up to her rational and humane standards, which may seem Western, but which are more properly to be described as internationalist.

Frieda Das writes in her book about how, newly arrived in America from her home country Switzerland, she met a young Indian student named Sarangadhara Das at Berkeley during her period of study at Stanford as an art historian and about how her great interest in things Indian eventually prompted her to marry Sarangadhar in 1917. The book recounts the story of their return to India to build a life of their own around Sarangadhara's dream project to start a sugar plantation in a remote jungle in the district of Dhenkanal in his native state. Sarangadhar had received training in agricultural technology at the University of Tokyo and Berkeley, and this was attempt on his part to pay back his poor state. This pursuit on the part of a young, educated, gifted and highly unusual couple of the ever receding ideals of love and work and the demanding but unavailing Sisyphean labour needed to sustain these under extremely trying circumstances forms the core of the book. But Frieda embroiders the narrative with many telling vignettes about India in the 1920s and with wonderfully etched pen-portraits of some of the most famous Indians she came into contact with during those momentous times when, as she puts it, "the Indian tiger was frightfully worrying the British lion" (Ch. 11). These included Dr. J.C. Bose and Lady Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Lala Lajpat Rai, and, of course, Mahatma Gandhi, Mirabai, and C.R. Das and his sister Urmila. The first edition of *A Marriage to India*, published by Vintage Books, New York, has as its frontispiece a sketch of Mahatma Gandhi (said to be the first portrait that he ever formally sat for) done by Frieda herself when Gandhi was on a

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tour of Orissa's famine-ravaged villages and districts.

The changed climate in which the book is to be read now will cause attention to focus on this narrative penumbra full of the colonial-era doings and goings on. And quite rightly so. With its frank and spirited condemnation of the men who ruled India and of the women who played second fiddle to these men, Frieda's book can open up a new chapter of postcolonial imaginings which shall help offset the colonial-era arrogance of men like Beames, Sterling and Hunter who constitute the standard reference points for studies on Orissa. The reader can savour the brutal honesty of the following observation by Frieda: "White people in India, without consulting Indians, have apportioned to themselves, such enormous salaries (think here of the young John Beames's starting salary of 1783 rupees a month in Calcutta as a young ICS officer in the 1850s) and such lordly ways of living (think here of the British District Collector's 'cchota haziri', as described by Beames in his memoir) for which Indian money pays, that it did not seem so very wrong when under-paid Indian servants took their own means of getting a slice of this back into Indian hands in 'commissions'" (Ch. 2). The English memsahib draws flak from her as well: "Hers was a material fullness of life far beyond any she could have dreamed of in her England. There was no culture nor liking for culture about her. She read rarely, and nothing but novels" (Ch. 11). If there is another book on Orissa written by a Westerner which can be said to match Frieda's in self-criticism, it is *People of the Leaves* (1931) by Vivien Meik, a male writer. A tribe living in a state of Edenic innocence in the deep and inaccessible forests of Rairakhol in Orissa forms the basis of Meik's critique of the materialism of the Western civilization.

An intriguing and sensitive aspect of Frieda Das's book is, of course, her attempt to negotiate the multilingualism of Indian society and her revelation (in Chapter 8) that from her husband she learnt not a single word of Oriya, although he taught her one Bangla sentence, the equivalent of the English "I love you." Textual evidence points to the fact that she had learnt a smattering of Oriya. But the point about her husband's indifference to her Oriya learning project seems to connect with the larger theme of anglophilism that is a pronounced feature of Oriya society both then and now, in fact more now than then thanks to globalization, but with its roots reaching back to the beginning of the colonial era.

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Be that as it may, Frieda succeeds in telling a poignant and tragic tale of love and loss with Orissa as an intimate backdrop. Her love was probably doomed to fail from the start, as the premonitory opening passage of *A Marriage to India* so touchingly reveals: "Had I been wise in reading signs, my very first day in Bombay would have prepared and armed me. But I was not eager, not wise. What wise woman in this age would have hugged the illusion that her inter-racial marriage was of significance, was helping to tear down human barriers, furthering tolerance and mutual understanding" (Ch. 1)! Their marriage finally cracks under the burden of racial and caste tensions, although it is ascribed in a mystical way to the jungle: "Unspoken, the knowledge lay between us: we could not bend the jungle to the purpose of our joint life; it was the end" (Ch. 18).

That eagerness, that passion, that earnestness of heart is never ever rued by Frieda as she parts from Sarangadhar Das in the Conradian darkness of an Orissan jungle with an aching heart: "Long after the little straw-thatched village was lost to sight, the heart-rending howling of my dogs still reached me through the enfolding trees. But, the jungle knew of a grief too deep for tongue" (Ch. 18). As the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer put it, "Mme. Hauswirth's regard for her husband, her love for her adopted country have not wilted in the clutch of Indian circumstances (*TLS*, No. 1548, October 1931, p. 753)." The fine writer and painter that Frieda Das is (and she turned her sharp and sympathetic writerly eye to other aspects of India that urgently needed reform such as *purdah*), she brought out the delicate textures of her Indian experience exquisitely. The summing up may well be provided by the concluding line of the *TLS* review: "But it is an engrossing tale; and on the quiet dignity of the telling there is some imprint of genius".

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CHAPTER ONE

Had I been wise in reading signs, my very first day in Bombay would have prepared and armed me. But I was eager, not wise. What wise woman in this age would have hugged the illusion that her inter-racial marriage was of significance, was helping to tear down human barriers, furthering tolerance and mutual understanding!

My first disillusionment was with regard to the idea that India would welcome me with open arms. Even on board the steamer, after they saw me waving to my Hindu husband who stood waiting below on the dock, some English fellow-travelers passed me by with barely a nod or totally ignoring me; once in India they had no more use for a white woman who had torn down their carefully constructed barriers of race-isolation. Indian fellow passengers, on the other hand, parted from me with cordial wishes, though with doubts of my success. Princess Bamba, with whom I had continually played chess, ended with a warm invitation to visit her in the north, though she was frankly pessimistic as to my future, for she herself had married an Englishman.

Custom's delays: Englishmen traveling alone, Englishwomen being received by their countrymen, each and every white face being attended to before myself—because my companions were brown-faced.

With a thrill I watched my heavy baggage being piled onto a two-wheeled cart drawn by white bullocks with blue bead-garlands around their necks, while we ourselves went off in an open victoria behind a scarlet-turbaned wonder of a coachman. Then I heard news: Bombay was overcrowded!

During the war; building had been at a standstill, yet the population had greatly increased. Now the renewed influx of travelers from abroad crowded the hotels to overflowing. Apartments were dearer than in San Francisco or even New York; the most desirable ones were reserved "only for Europeans." Not one room was available in the two best hotels. For three weeks past my husband and his friends had scoured Bombay unsuccessfully to find a place to receive me in. There was no way out; we would have to put up for the time being at the Watson

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Hotel—distinctly third-rate, yet even so at prices above San Francisco prices.

Used to the immaculateness of American hotels, its very entrance struck me as dingy and untidy. Up we went behind a noiseless barefoot "boy" to our room. A huge four-poster bed stood in the center on a nondescript strip of matting; over the rackety ill-kept furniture and ugly bare walls spotted by mildew hovered an indefinable feeling of dust and neglect. I opened a door: a still dingier bathroom without running water, only an ugly stained zinc tub on the floor; another door: a washstand with jug and bowl and soap-basins which my first glance discovered not to be clean; a commode, not even a flush-system. I turned back to the room, overwhelmed for a moment by a flood of disappointment and presentiment. I had pictured my first home in India so very differently. To hide the welling tears from my husband, I stepped out onto the closely shuttered veranda. A wonderland: well-built government buildings, gorgeous trees and green lawns, and beyond the sea bathed in shimmering heat. From the road below rose a jingling and chanting—street dancers in brilliant colors performing for the benefit of watchers like myself. Under the shade of a huge tree at the street corner just such groups and types lounging about as I had dreamed of and hoped to paint.

When I turned back to the room for a new survey, I noticed that the bottom of the mosquito curtain was filthy from dirty hands, and all at once I revolted. I had heard of the discrimination everywhere in India against Indians, had had a small taste of it at the customs; it *could* not be possible that the English management of this hotel would dare offer such accommodation to English people; it must be because an Indian had made the reservation! Surely it was impossible that in the Watson, one of the largest hotels in Bombay, all rooms should be so horribly kept.

I started my Indian life by making a row: insisted on clean curtains and washstand until, after much delay, I got them. But still it did not occur to me that the years to come would be one prolonged fight against negligence and dirt.

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In the afternoon we drove through the Bombay bazaar: glorious color and faces; unbelievably narrow neglected streets and filth; diseased beggars displaying revolting sores; dogs and cats starved down to skin and bone, some so mangy as to be quite hairless. Then on through English Bombay: beautiful bungalows among shady trees; parks, smooth wide roads, rich carriages. What contrast!

The next few weeks were spent in flat-hunting. Husband and friends searched separately; we searched together, in vain. Carriage and taxi bills mounted appallingly.

"Why not take the street-car, Sarang?"

"No, only low-class people use it. My position and your white face don't permit it."

That is where I ran up against my first class-restriction.

At last I started hunting independently. I might have better success alone, I thought. Then I came up against the caste, religious, and race problems, in so simple a matter as looking for a flat to start housekeeping: there were dwellings for Parsees only, for Hindus only, for Europeans only—there were no flats for an Indian married to an American, nor boarding-houses, nor were there any reasonably-priced hotels!

In desperation I went at last to one of the very finest boarding-houses, willing to pay their high price, as even so it would be far less than hotel bills. The broad curving driveway was sheltered by royal palms, there were wide verandas with a profusion of potted plants and ferns; it looked alluring. I was taken into a large, cool living room by a noiseless barefoot butler who disappeared to call the English "hostess," for her appearance told me she did not consider herself a landlady. She did not need to mention in almost her very first sentence that all who were under her roof were "paying guests."

Instinctively, we liked each other. One room only was free, but I was glad to take any and arranged to move in the next morning. Just before leaving, I said casually, "Of course, you understand from my name that my husband is a Hindu."

The change in her face was too amazing.

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"Oh, oh, no!" she fairly stammered, "I did not clearly catch it." Then she collected herself, and spoke suddenly very simply and genuinely.

"I am so sorry, so sorry. I should really like to have *you*, but the other guests would not tolerate a native."

How very different all this was from what I had expected.

I had come in search of an India with age-old traditions of spiritual calm and achievement, of great unselfish devotions, of deep indifference to worldly success, of smilingly tolerant aversion to the mad Western rush towards nowhere. But of this India I found no trace in my first weeks in Bombay.

One moment I was ready to blame my own race for its shallow assertion of superiority, and became convinced that it is really a fear-complex masking an inferiority consciousness, for the white race cannot hold its own in certain parts of the globe without resort to force and intimidation. But just when I was ready to settle down comfortably into this conviction I received other jolts: I realized the Mohammedan feels superior to the Hindu, the Brahmin to the non-Brahmin; I realized the gulf between English and Hindu is not one jot greater than that between high-caste and low-caste or out-caste. Always this maddening undercurrent of color-antagonism everywhere, active and superficial on the part of the whites, placid and deep on the part of the high-caste.

In my perplexity I laughed and growled at everybody, the English, the Indians, and myself. The easy consolation of placing the blame at one definite door was denied me. I did not vision that this, too, would be my fate concerning everything throughout the years to come: forever mixed feelings, an ever-increasing complexity of problems, repellent dirt, gripping misery, appalling selfishness and exploitation side by side with sublime self-abnegation, marvelous beauty of color and form — and never the chance of fixing the blame and earning placid rest. For with every passing day and month and year I was to see deeper into the causes and to realize that everyone in turn was right, and everyone was wrong.

After weeks of fruitless hunting we at last accepted the invitation of the two bachelor engineers, with whom Sarang had been staying before

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my arrival, to come and share their flat. There were but two bedrooms and a living room, very small quarters indeed for four people and two servants; but we were glad of a chance to put a stop to the frightful hotel expenses. For although Sarang was drawing a high salary, he was deep in debt, due to the great expenses of our trips and the long period of unemployment caused by unforeseen delays in the issuance of passports.

Sarang had nothing but his own efforts to fall back upon. His only brother, older than he, had been unable to help him when Sarang returned from the States, though Sarang's share of the family property was still in the brother's hands. In fact, during all the years of Sarang's absence, his brother had sent no financial help.

Sarang's ruler, the Maharaja of Dhenkanal, a small native state in Orissa, had sent him to study at the University of Calcutta when he was sixteen. Sarang had been under the Maharaja's notice from the first days of childhood, for they belonged to the same caste (Kshatria), and Sarang's uncle was prime minister. This was about the time when Russia was defeated by Japan and the eyes of all Asia were turned toward the latter in surprise and hope. There was an exodus of Hindu students to Japan, and the Maharaja at last assented to Sarang's plea for permission to go to study at the University of Tokyo. But after two years of rather fruitless work there, he had set his heart on going to the States, as American technical training in industries and agriculture was far superior. He wrote back for permission to proceed to America. By return mail came a letter from his Maharaja: "I have sent you to study sugar-making. You have been at Calcutta; you are the first of my subjects to cross the seas, you have been two years in Japan, you know enough. Come back!"

Sarang did not go back. Nor did he answer. Quietly he cut down his expenses to the utmost for a few months, and with his savings sailed for Seattle, third class. Only then did he write to tell his Maharaja that he was in the States and entering the University of California. In full detail he set forth explanations, excuses, and the marvels of knowledge he would bring back for the benefit of His Highness's State.

His letter received the simplest of possible answers: "You have disobeyed your ruler's orders; your allowance is stopped!"

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Never again did he receive a penny. So, this high-caste youth, whose background was one of effortless ease, of scorn for manual labor, was faced with the problem both of making a living and getting an American college education. With quiet humor and not a trace of self-pity he told of his start. His last money was gone; college was opening. It was imperative to get work. But of work he knew just exactly nothing. In answer to an advertisement he interviewed a formidable-looking housekeeper of Berkeley, Mrs. X.

"Have you done housework before?"

"Oh, yes, madam—" this with great assurance.

"Did you wash dishes?"

"Oh, yes, I am proficient!"

She looked at him a bit dubiously, but Sarang's rather winning smile and honest eyes apparently conquered. They agreed on terms: board and room for four hours' work a day. She started him at once to sweep out the living room. Pointing out to him where brooms, mops and dusters were, she then went upstairs.

Sarang got hold of his broom with a will and the best intention in the world of rewarding his first employer by most faithful and efficient work. But the broom balked. He grappled it with a death-clutch and set to, giving mighty strokes from side to side over the heavy carpet.

Suddenly there was a shriek from the top of the stairs: "Stop!" There stood Mrs. X. coughing and waving her arms: "What *are* you doing? What on God's earth are you raising such a dust for? It is filling even the hall upstairs!" She dashed down and tore the broom out of his hands. She glared at him. Then something of his good will and utter dejection appealed to her. She kept silent for a while, and then asked: "Confess, have you ever done any work before?"

"No, madam"—very meekly.

"I have heard that said of you Hindu students!" she exclaimed with astonishment and disapproval mixed.

"But, madam," he found the courage to say, "I am willing to learn, and I do so need the emoluments attached to this profession!"

Mrs. X. suddenly laughed: "Righto, I'll teach you this profession." Forthwith she showed him how to get the better of a broom, and that

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is how Sarang found a home and motherly care during his first semester.

Once launched on his theoretical training in industrial agriculture, summer vacations were spent working in the sugar refineries and beet-fields of California.

He was one of over thirty Hindu students attending the University of California about 1910. Nationally very conscious, the majority of these students tried their best to live and work in a way that would reflect honor on their mother-land. This was the period of keen, crude enthusiasms—cosmopolitan clubs meeting on a basis of frank comraderie, acclamation of international sympathies, denunciation of national and racial prejudices. The Hindus felt a proud and sensitive need to do whatever they could to counteract the talks of returning missionaries, to whose money-collecting interests it was to paint India black. They never missed a chance of arranging lectures by themselves or by prominent Indians who passed through San Francisco. I attended one such lecture, an illustrated talk on Indian women, given in the home of a Mrs. Schofield in Palo Alto. It left the impression that the women of India were all either heroines or saints.

After this lecture was over and the audience had departed, three or four visiting Hindus from the University of California remained behind and held forth as to what would be done by them and their fellows to change things in India. Of course, the English were to be driven out. A few well-aimed bombs and they would be on the run. Had I noticed how many among their students were studying chemistry? What for, did I think-? Then the Maharajas were to be dethroned, a United States of India formed, caste and the veil abolished by law, temples plundered, schools established with that money, towns cleaned up. It was all so very simple and sure!

This was the first, time I paid close attention to one very young and for the moment quiet Hindu student from Berkeley. He listened silently with a humorous smile to his friends' haranguing. At last he said: "That's all very well, but you can't go on plundering temples forever. To do all the things you say you'll do, economic backbone is needed. No, I won't help you to manufacture bombs. I'll be the

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despised farmer. I'll grow my sugar, accumulate money by all the old-time capitalistic means we now decry, and in the end you will all have to come to me for the capital to keep your schools running and your hospitals open!"

I turned to the others, pointing at him in laughing derision: "There's your budding capitalist, your Sugar King!" But something in his quiet amused assurance impressed me as being stronger and saner than the talk of the others.

This young Hindu was Sarangadhar Das, and the term Sugar King, so lightly applied, stuck to him.

I was at this time a student at Stanford University, to which I had come directly from my native Switzerland. Before I ever met any of the Hindu students I had already become interested in Hindu philosophy and literature, and had been drawn strongly to the ancient theory of Karma. This idea of inescapable justice beyond human or divine intercession or interference gave me my first conception of a sublimely ordered universe. It also seemed to place human life on a greater basis of dignity.

Then I came to read the great epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. They gripped me far more than the epics of my own race, the *Nibelungen* and *Beowulf*. They seemed so much more profound, so intensely concerned with deeper and gentler truths. Our Norse legends seemed crude, gory and physical by contrast. The revelation of that Song of Songs, the *Bhagawat-Gita*, with Krishna's great teaching;— Do right because it is right, without fear of punishment or hope, of reward—seemed a highly elevated type of morality.

Under the influence of my Hindu friends my interest gradually shifted from Indian philosophy and literature to the social and economic aspects of Indian life, to history and politics. Under their guidance my reading was bound to be one-sided. Vivekananda, Margaret Noble, Savarkar, Cotton, Digby, Sunderland—these were typical of the authors I studied.

While this reading and the attitude of the majority of the Hindu students made me vividly realize their strong nationalist bias, and while the great historic struggle for freedom of my birth-country gave me a natural

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sympathy for like aspirations in all countries, still, I was, in theory at least, an internationalist. Intellectually, however, I was at this time more preoccupied with India than any other land. I was, moreover, searching for an outlet in practical work. If I continued to interest myself in India, the only sane thing I, an outsider, could do was to bear to India some constructive gift from the West, such as knowledge of sanitation, child psychology, and educational methods. Political questions were too complex, the elements and personalities involved too muddled and incalculable for me to care to touch them. These problems were not mine. Indian brains and hands had permitted them to become tangled; only they could fathom and unravel them. It was their Karma.

I had come to believe that no efforts of the Indian patriot in voluntary or involuntary exile equaled in intrinsic value the quietest work of even a village schoolmaster in India. The life of Indian exiles in the States was rather pathetic, an uncertain hovering between two worlds, permeated by a sense of irremediable hopelessness and futility.

A growing conviction pervaded me that these few individuals, inwardly and outwardly already so disconnected from their mother-country could in no way deeply affect her destiny. I felt with leaping intuition that this could never be the road over which the liberation of a great ancient race would come. Sure, steady, sound growth from within alone could free her from all shackles, both alien and self-imposed.

From this time on (1915), I planned definitely to try for educational contacts in India, and reached out for sound connections. Munshi Ram, head of the Gurukula College, wrote me a warm letter, saying he himself had translated, for several vernacular papers, some articles of mine printed in the *Modern Review* of Calcutta, as he considered them helpful to Indian students. He would be glad to help me to the utmost in any undertaking for the education of women, should I go to India.

Then, as luck would have it, I met Sir Jagadish and Lady Bose in San Francisco. Sir Jagadish was on his first lecture tour to American universities in connection with his botanical discoveries. A mutual liking sprang up between Lady Bose and myself. It was arranged that I should come to Calcutta the following winter to help her in her attempts at modernizing

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the Brahmo Girls' School. This was in 1916 when travel to India was very restricted. Though the Boses stood guarantee for me, the British visa for my American passport was denied. Both Lady Bose and I were very much disappointed.

I had now for a very considerable time concentrated all my studies and efforts upon the purpose of going to India for educational work. When these plans were suddenly blocked by this outside force, I was at an utter loss. In great perturbation I wrote for advice to Sarangadhar Das, who by then had finished his theoretical studies and was getting his practical experience as chief chemist of the Paia sugar mills at Maui in Hawaii. His answer to my letter telling of my wrecked hopes with Lady Bose was a renewed proposal of marriage and a plea that I come and join him in Hawaii during the war, after which we could proceed together to India for joint work.

I replied that I did not want-anyone ever to be able to say that I had gone to India because of a man; I wanted to go to India on her own account and mine. I wrote: let us both go there independently, establish ourselves, and then, if it seems desirable, and both our work will benefit by it, we can consider marriage.

In actuality, I was not really thinking of marriage at all at the time. I felt a greater need to find scope for expression as an independent worker. Sarang and I had been good friends for almost six years — ever since that first meeting when I had labeled him "Sugar King." Our college activities had often brought us together, and later on we kept up a regular and stimulating correspondence. In my letters I had steadily encouraged his plans for reconstructive agricultural work in India, while his did a good deal to sustain my interest in educational needs.

For several years our correspondence had been spiced by his periodic proposals of marriage. He tried his best to instill the thought that I might get closer to India's life and India's needs as the wife of one of her sons than as an alien sojourner.

Now that my other plans were frustrated, after months of further correspondence, I began seriously to consider his point of view, and in 1917 I joined him in Hawaii where we were married. Tried friendship,

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sustained affection, and mutual aims and interests seemed to me a sounder basis for such a joint life than mere "falling in love."

We lived in a bungalow at the edge of the sea, with hibiscus blossoming in our hedge, papaias ripening at our door, bronzed fishermen standing on the big boulders in the foaming waters with gleaming lights playing over their bare supple bodies. The huge breakers of the winter seas flashed around our island, their last spent power actually swirling around the walls of the cottage.

A demure Japanese maiden, who came in her flowered kimono and left tiny slippers neatly ranged outside the door, did my rough work for me. Sundays there was bathing for both Sarang and me in the lovely warm surf; there were long rambles into the hills with their gulches carpeted with moss and maidenhair fern. Sarang proved an unfailingly thoughtful and jolly companion.

But his work in the sugar mills kept him busy from six in the morning to six at night. During this time I was all alone, twelve hours at a stretch, days slipping into weeks, weeks into months, with little to mark them. I was without society whatever, for here in Maui I had my first taste of the prejudice against mixed marriages: until the end of the first year not a single white woman called on me.

But I had my books; I could obtain dozens at one time from the library at Honolulu. Moreover, I faithfully kept to my idea of preparing myself for the coming time in India. We were happily busy shaping our plans. I collected and studied wide material from federal departments at Washington, especially everything connected with child-welfare, sanitation, hygiene, dietetics, education, etc. (Pamphlets from this collection circulated through many hands later in India and the whole finally found its way into the reference library of a girls' college.)

I sat in my bungalow planning what we would do in India. There would be a great fertile stretch of land, with huge trees, ponds, villages nearby. We would build model houses for the workers; there should be a dispensary, a school, maybe evening classes for the workers, care for pregnant and nursing mothers. Everything and everybody should be the

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better for our coming. We ourselves, of course, would be gladly welcomed, and helped in our endeavors. Money for such an enterprise would be easily forthcoming, no doubt, for I remembered the many educated and prominent Hindus who, in our discussions, had enthusiastically welcomed the idea of agricultural and industrial development for India.

There would be need in our enterprise for other trained men besides Sarang. He was versed in the chemical and administrative part of sugar-making. With this in view, I wrote to a dear Sikh friend of ours in California who had studied engineering, Lab Tehara Singh, and induced him to come to Hawaii, join one of the large sugar-machinery concerns, and master the mechanical part of it. Then there was Pad, our young friend who, through Sarang's help, was specializing in the agricultural part of sugar production in the college of Hawaii. The Sikh from the north, the Kshatria from the east, and the Brahmin from the south, tried friends all, would not the three, with combined effort, be able to build up in India a splendid new enterprise, something sound, something shining? Would this not be symbolic of the united India of the future that would no longer know caste or religious or sex restrictions? Would we not show India, like some Western capitalists with vision, that labor could be worthy, happy, hours reasonable, housing fine, children educated, sick people cared for—and yet everyone concerned, laborer as well as employer, distinctly a gainer? Could not such an enterprise be of the greatest possible educational significance—a hundredfold more so than my simple teaching work!

But although I had succeeded in drawing this constructive group of friends together, life even then took this first dream of mine out of my hands to reshape according to its own plans. Lab, in gratefulness for the education he had received in the States, joined the American army and died in service; Pad proved not to be ready for concerted work.

When the promise of peace dawned, Sarang and I returned to California where he wanted to complete some work at the university before leaving for India. To pass the time, and in answer to a

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repressed desire—to indulge which I had never before had money or leisure enough—I took up art studies at the California Institute of Art in San Francisco, little realizing that this avocation would soon engulf all previous interests. Incredible passport delays —against which we both fretted at the time—served to give me opportunity to get thoroughly grounded in painting and to convince me that at last I had struck the chord in life that would sing for me.

In January, 1920, a strange letter reached California. It bore two addresses, one in round, flowing Oriah characters, the other in meticulous English lettering. A stab of memory transported Sarang to a small jungle town some two hundred miles south of Calcutta. He tried to visualize his mother as she must appear now that his father was dead: her heavy black hair shorn in mourning, armlets, anklets and head adornments discarded forever. A lonely, small, bent figure in the widow's white garments—that must have been his mother as she had handed this letter to the mail-runner. Clad in a loin-cloth only, the man with fleet, bare feet had carried it at a steady trot through tiger-infested hills and across the Mahanadi, swarming with alligator and crocodile, to Cuttack, the nearest railway station. While running, the man must have chanted the old charms in broken snatches, to the accompaniment of merry bells jingling at the end of a bamboo pole. What better protection from prowling beasts than bells and charms for both letter and man?

DHENKANAL,
ORISSA AND BIHAR,
INDIA,
OCTOBER 30, 1919
CHILD,

The letter from your pen felt as though the Divine Lotus was in my hands. Tears of joy ran down in streams from my eyes. Is it true that I will again be blessed by the sight of your adored face before I depart from this world? I am always praying to Ishwar that it may come true.

Lately my body has been suffering from many ills and is extremely feeble. My

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flesh-eyes do not hope to survive till the joy-flooding moon of March.

Darling child, I am recounting the prayer-beads of remembrance: your child-love for me, the little happenings of your boyhood years; so many moments of happiness long gone by that it is sheer hurt. I waver between the joy of expectation of seeing you soon, and the dread that you may arrive too late. It is hard for my old heart to believe that you have really decided in the chambers of your soul to return, after disappointing us for over twelve years. Are you really coming to cool my burning heart? May Ishwar make it come true! I will believe it only when my burnt-out eyes behold you. Ah, when will this blessed happiness descend? Is it possible that Ishwar will anoint me with this rain of compassion and that I will hold in my hands the unapproachable moon of the heavens?

My mind is wandering hither and thither life the serpent that has shed its hood! Where is my child's ever-smiling face? Where is the cry of hunger of my dust-laden boy after school, "Mother, something to eat, quick"? All this seems a dream of ages rolled by. I bathe in hope, and lay my prayer at the lotus feet of Ishwar that just once again I may offer you food with my own feeble hands. Then will I die in happiness. All is in Ishwar's palm. I am living only for you,

YOUR POOR MOTHER

The old mother had been told that her son had married an American girl. But not one word in this letter of rejoicing over the imminent homecoming referred to the wife. Yet it was I, the strange white woman, who was possibly as deeply moved by the letter as my husband. I knew it must have been a terrible blow to an orthodox Hindu mother to have her son marry a foreigner. She could not help but agonize over her love of her son and her dread of the strange influence and barrier created by the white daughter-in-law, if she could ever bring herself to consider me such.

I had just suffered more than I had thought possible by the death of my own mother, the news of which had come to me at the very moment when I was writing that I would soon be with her in Europe on my way to India.

I had come to a full understanding of the tragedy of old isolated lives, of mothers who, after giving and rearing life, have to slip out into the great darkness in loneliness. A vehement determination rose in

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me that if humanly possible my husband should reach his mother in time. I humbly felt, too, that out of this letter spoke such a love as he never would have from me, and that its culminating desire should not be frustrated by any act or attitude or even any failure to act on my part. Therefore I urged him to leave when, a short time afterwards, he received his passport to India, via Japan, though I myself could not go till later, via Europe.

The day before his departure I tore my husband loose from the scramble of packing, and we went roaming over the Marin County hills. It was the beginning of April. Hill and dale were an incredible glory of carpeted flowers, of blue lupin and orange poppy. Grass vibrated golden-green underfoot, live oaks cast immense, warm shadows, the hills curved purring backs against the caressing hand of a deep blue sky, white cloud-lambs frolicked and peeped in delight at their mirrored image in the flashing bay.

An inner sense told me that never again would my husband see this spring glory of a temperate clime, this singing freshness. Mine had been the joy of making him conscious of the beauty of flowers and sunsets and opal seas, and I wanted him to carry away with him, unforgettably, this radiant image of the country of his adoption, the country that had given both him and myself the chance of youthful expansion, of a liberal education.

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CHAPTER TWO

What a contrast between my husband's last day in California and my first in Bombay! Between the neat little home at Tiburon, on San Francisco bay, and our new home on Chaupati beach! For at last we had found an apartment of our own. Some Parsees, going up north for some months, were willing to let us rent their flat temporarily. It was an old house, but its windows overlooked the beach with its lovely curve of sea.

My first glance revealed to me that I should need an army of coolies for cleaning purposes before I could dream of putting any of my own things in. Certain hidden shelves or corners under furniture could not have been cleaned for years. I kept three coolies busy for two solid days just scrubbing away.

The first moment I had tried to snatch a rest in one chair had been enough to teach me that the flat contained the liveliest furniture with which I had ever come into contact. It was exquisite heavily-carved teakwood and ebony, furniture that undoubtedly dated from the Dutch or Portuguese period. In the dining room one wall was flanked by an immense sideboard so beautiful that it would be the pride of the finest Western dining room. The top had evidently been equipped with gas plates as a kitchen range. Its polish was absolutely ruined as drippings from countless pots had boiled over.

It took hours with the stiffest brushes and disinfecting fluids to clean up this mess. I did the same with all the furniture and then called in some carpenters to polish up. These men took small wads of cotton wrapped in a piece of cloth and applied the varnish with the endless rubbing and elbow grease that brings out such a beautiful luster. Before proceeding to the polishing, I poured quarts of kerosene into all the corners and crannies of closets and furniture. I did the first experimenting myself. Taking a cane armchair I put mykerosene into an oil-can and applied it to the numberless little holes through which the rattan slipped. After the first spurt or two, out would come the little brown flat pests in a desperate attempt to save their lives, but not one could crawl more than a quarter of an inch away before death overtook it.

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Walls and floors were of stone and luckily offered no hiding-places. So at last I felt we might safely move in. Because the flat consisted of only four rooms, we decided to start with but two servants and a sweeper. Coming from California where servants are rare, this seemed to me to promise luxurious ease. Through our engineer friend's cook, news had spread in the servant world that I was planning to engage help. The following application quite captured me.

MOST HONOURED MADUM,

In the, Balakram cook, humbly Informed you, I heard by Utchaba that you want a cook in your place, pay Rs. 30. So I am willing to come & doing work under your place herewith I keep my certificate to new of my beaver, therefore I humbly Informed you. if you would take me. if send, trumfair and, Advance Rs. 20 1 am Start Immediately, please let me know, soon as you can. I am waiting for your Kindly Reply.
your Most Obedient
Servant BALAKRAM, *Cook*
Kindly, Salam.

Upon investigation, I found that Balakram was the brother of a Kashmiri cook newly imported from the Himalayas and, wonder of wonders, the two brothers were Brahmins, yet willing to cook for foreign women. They must indeed have felt very far away from their own caste group to condescend to lower themselves so. It did not matter that Balakram spoke far less English than his letter had led me to believe—a letter that some bright scholar among the servants must have composed for him. Balakram was engaged.

A Bengali doctor sent us Rama, a boy from the hills, who was to act as bearer. A bearer is a very ambiguous personality, with a hundred variations of duties: he may be traveling guide, child's nurse, butler, housemaid, messenger boy, separately or all rolled into one, as occasion requires. Rama was to sweep the rooms, dust, and wait on table. Balakram was to do the shopping in the bazaar, and the cooking.

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The sweeper would take care of the bathrooms. Balakram's wages were thirty rupees a month, Rama's twenty, the sweeper's twelve.

I started in with a vivid memory of poor Utchaba, our friend's servant, tossing in high fever on the stone floor, no one seeming to pay the slightest attention to him. I would not be guilty of such treatment of a human being! So the first time I sent Balakram to the bazaar to buy the initial supply of food stuffs, I told him also to bring back two rope cots, two small tables and stools.

When he came back, I started to take accounts. He was accompanied by a coolie who put a big basket of vegetables and provisions at my feet. Balakram opened his own bundle, a dust cloth in which he had tied up meat, eggs and spices. Warned that I must be careful or I would be cheated, I started very solemnly. When the list of objects at my feet had been duly accounted for, Balakram charged me with the hire of two coolies.

"Two?" I asked, for there was only one basket at my feet.

"Yes, Memsahib, I had to have another coolie to bring back our cots."

These cots were made of the lightest of wooden frames strung with rope. I could easily with one single hand raise one high from the floor.

"What, you paid a coolie to carry home your cot?"

"Yes, Memsahib."

I kept silent, not knowing enough of bazaar customs. Later on I asked my husband.

"Certainly, neither he nor your bearer would carry their own cots from the bazaar. That is coolie labor. They are above such demeaning work."

After I had engaged Balakram I thought I had everything settled, but he approached me with a disturbing question.

"Who will wash the dishes, Memsahib?"

I had taken it for granted that he would do so, just as our friends' cook, Utchaba, had done at their house. No, indeed, he, a Brahmin, could not wash my dishes, and dish-washing wasn't a bearer's job. Balakram just simply had to have a helper who would wash his

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dishes and pans for him.

It worried me that the flat had no separate room for the servants, but I was assured that none of the flats ever had; servants slept wherever they might, in hallways, on verandas, or in the kitchen. Their bedding and spare clothing was rolled up in the morning and tucked into any bare corner. I did not like this, but there was no way out. At least, I thought, now that my servants had their own beds, their existence would be a bit less animal-like. These beds and the thin mattresses that I also supplied were placed upright against the back wall of the veranda during the daytime, for lack of space.

It was not many weeks before I realized that their beds peacefully reposed there at night as well as in daytime. The servants thought it far too much bother to take them down. They were used to sleeping on stone floors and it was so much simpler.

So that is where my first effort at reform went smash.

Then came the kitchen. The first few days when I went there, the two tables stood immaculately untouched. Everything was on the floor, vegetables, dishes, pots and pans, dusters, even dishcloths. A battle royal began between me and cook. He seemed very willing to help me in my efforts to elevate my kitchen at least table-high. But in some strange way, somehow, the things had slipped back onto the floor again whenever I happened to burst unexpectedly into the kitchen.

After weeks of useless fussing, vegetables and sauce-pans won out and remained on the floor, but over the question of dishes I was adamant, also over the way in which they should be washed. I installed the two-dish-pan system, one for hot soapsuds, the other for hot, clear, rinsing water. But how did it come about that every now and then in the huge metal tub where water was stored, I found bits of food floating about?

In the section of Bombay where I was living, the water supply was limited. Only until eight in the morning, and between six and seven in the evening did water flow in the taps at all. Bombay, second largest city of India, has an incredibly poor supply. So we had to fill containers with spare water to last us through the day, and to be used in fire

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emergencies. From that big metal container in the kitchen, water would be drawn with which to cook our food and prepare our tea, yet no doubt the servants were sometimes quickly rinsing a plate in it.

Balakram, however, was unfailingly cheerful and willing at all times. We grew quite fond of him. On his side, too, he went out of his way to please us. My esteem for him rose at a bound when I found that during his leisure hours he regularly spent some time reading a huge paper-covered book in heavy black print. At last he had discovered a real use for one of the tables; he would sit perched up on the high stool, his slim brown legs twined around those of the chair, the book opened on the table before him. Sitting thus with his turbaned head on cupped hands, he would pore over what I found to be no less than the *Ramayana*, that great epic of India that is at the same time also its sacred scripture.

I realized that Balakram, indeed, was no ordinary servant. Not one in a million knows how to read.

I could not have been more impressed if I had found a young scullery maid in the West reading Aristotle. My social zeal that was destined to get so many knocks pricked up its head. Surely this Brahmin from Kashmir should not remain a servant. As he had already made astonishing progress with his spoken English, I offered to teach him to write it. He seemed delighted.

One afternoon, when all the work was finished, I called him into the living room and gave him paper and pencils. As I myself had started Hindustani some weeks before, I had the first lesson all written out for him, Devanagri script above, English letters below. Then underneath these, slowly, I wrote them once more for him. Awkwardly, he leaned over the little table at my elbow and started writing.

"Sit down," I said.

He looked at me in amazement. Only the greatest persuasion brought him to the point of sitting down in my presence for his lesson. Once at ease, bodily and mentally, he indeed made very rapid progress.

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Rama, however, was often slighting his work. After the great pains I had taken to teach him, it annoyed me very much that corners were never cleaned nor shelves dusted unless I had my eye on him. It irritated me to have to bother about such details because I was wildly anxious to get down to my Hindustani and my painting and sketching. Had the fellow no sense of responsibility at all?

I had always held the belief that the people, who, from choice or necessity, do the humblest work of the world and relieve us of the burden of doing it ourselves, are really our benefactors. We owe them our leisure, our chance of developing and enjoying the higher faculties. For this important service I felt society ought to render to such workers at least both comfort and an assured living.

Now that I was in the tropics and, although it was still winter, beginning to feel the energy-wasting effect of the climate, I considered that I actually owed my precious chance of painting to my servants. Feeling this way, I could not dream of putting padlocks on the cupboards that held my stores, as I had been advised to do. I remembered my remark to an Englishwoman on the steamer: "Trust people and they will respond in kind." She had answered: "Talk to me two years later when you know India!" She had also told me that I would daily have to measure out the portions of rice, *dal*, *ghee*, and condiments that my servants would need for their food as well as all foodstuffs for my table. This seemed to me a flagrant display of lack of trust; in fact, I felt as if I would be accusing Balakram to his face of being a thief were I to dole out provisions to him in such a manner.

In the circumscribed social life in the Swiss mountains in which I had been raised, honesty had been taken as a matter of course; neither consciousness nor pride had been attached to it; it was as simple and essential a matter as the clear air we breathed. During all the years of my school-days, I remember hearing of but a single theft—the theft of a watch and a hat—and that stirred the community so that it was a tale to be retold around the big stone-hearths for many a winter's evening.

This background probably was responsible for my profound feeling

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that suspicion degraded all parties concerned, and I certainly had not come to starving India to pull people down with mean suspicions about food. I was willing that my servants should have whatever food I had, preparing it in any way that would be suitable to them. Beyond this, I had very little idea of how much would be needed in quantity to supply all needs.

It did seem to me that supplies were disappearing very rapidly, but busy with my sketching and eager to watch this marvelous new teeming life of the Bombay streets, I left it without much further thought in the hands of Balakram—Balakram the Brahmin who read the great epics in his quiet kitchen while the hot, teeming life of Bombay went on outside. The clashing of cymbals; the shrilling of queer pipes and incessant drumming would draw me to my window: there they passed, low-class men and women, a great crowd of devotees of some one of the few million Indian gods, brightly gowned and loaded with marigold garlands. In their midst reeled some initiates, women who had been subjected to rites and fasting for hours and days on end; who danced till their dancing became a convulsive compelling obsession quite outside and beyond their own power of control—these women, now "possessed by the goddess," danced their way to the seashore for the final rite of immersion, unseeing, unheeding, fenced in and borne along by a living and moving hedge.

There was so much to watch, to absorb. I forgot all about the big tomes I had read concerning India before I reached her shores; abstract, theoretic interests and concerns went under in this new flood of revelation through sight and sound. And even when the crashing of a dish, or a quiet, "Memsahib, please" at my elbow drew my attention back to servants and household concerns, I met an India quite different from that all my books and my Hindu friends in the States had led me to expect. They had said so very little about bedbugs and mango chutney!

As soon as the Bengali doctor who had sent us Rama knew that we had started housekeeping, he sent his peon with a large basket

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of vegetables and another basket of beautiful flowers- On top of the basket of vegetables there was a jar of delicious mango chutney which Mrs. Biswas herself had prepared for us.

This was just one of dozens of lovely little acts on the part of Indians towards me, the strange new-comer; I appreciated it deeply. Moreover, the chutney was delicious, but I could take it only in little tastes as I was still not used to hot condiments. Shortly afterwards, on going to the cupboard, I found this chutney-bottle three-fourths empty, when our own use would have accounted for at most an eighth of it. That did not seem fair to me, so I called Balakram. Balakram gave a disgusted grunt:

"It is that thief and son of a thief, Rama," he exclaimed. "I myself would never dream of touching Memsahib's chutney. He takes too much of everything."

I happened to glance into the sugar bin. "What, that, too, almost empty?" Surely, judging from what I had used in my own two-person housekeeping in California, the supply should have lasted us for weeks longer. The rice bin was also almost empty. Many other items were low: so many that the servants could not possibly have eaten all.

Balakram looked at me with the most deeply grieved and honest eyes in the world and started damning Rama again.

"All right, Balakram, after this you are responsible for these stores; take care of them."

"What on earth could they have done with those supplies?" I asked Sarang that night.

"Resold them, no doubt, and pocketed the money," he said crisply. On the morrow, Rama came to me indignantly. "Memsahib, Balakram has locked the cupboard and I have neither sugar nor tea. What he gives me would not keep . . ."—he searched for a comparison and suddenly pointed to a lizard on the wall— ". . . it would not keep that lizard alive, Memsahib. Tell Balakram to give me the keys, Memsahib."

"Rama," I said severely, "it is I who told Balakram to take charge of the stores. Why did you eat Memsahib's chutney, and where did all that sugar go?"

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"Memsahib!" Rama exclaimed, shocked, and looked at me with the most deeply grieved and honest eyes, "It is that thief and son of a thief, that Brahmin, who has taken all that sugar himself; I would never dream of touching Memsahib's chutney!"

I had just heard of a saying in India that lizards confirm truth-telling. Like bits of decoration they fasten themselves motionless to the walls, waiting for some luckless insect to come within reach, then pounce like lightning. Whenever discussions between those strange humans below them wax serious they break their silence with a high little chirp *"sat! sat!"* (truth), which endorses some weighty statement, or admonishes the liar.

This flashed through my mind, now that Rama had pointed to the lizard. Very gravely I also pointed and said accusingly:

"Rama, the lizard is silent!"

He looked abashed at me, and then reproachfully at the lizard—how ungrateful of the shimmering little beast not to fib for once on behalf of one who had left so very many cobwebs in corners that helped to attract fat dinners! Then Rama's face suddenly lighted:

"Memsahib, the lizard no can tell truth, his mouth is occupy by much fly!"

Sure enough, a lovely golden night-moth was just then more important even to a lizard than exact truth. That ended Rama's interrogation for that day.

Now I, in turn, was deeply grieved—the whole situation was beyond me. Trust apparently was not being answered in kind! When Balakram next gave me his bazaar account I thought I would try a new approach.

"Balakram," I said, "Rama accuses you, too, of taking more than you need. I don't know what really happened and I don't understand it, but you read the *Gita* and you know what the *Gita* enjoins. It doesn't matter what has happened before today, and I don't care who took that food, but from now on I trust you to take care."

Balakram looked still more grieved than before, so that I almost felt like apologizing.

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"How could I take Memsahib's things when Memsahib is so good to me?" he wailed. "Memsahib is too kind. If Memsahib will closely watch Rama when next she calls him into this room, then Memsahib will see."

"What do you mean?"

"Does Memsahib not keep the cigarette tin on the table beside the flowers?"

I kept silent, for I understood suddenly.

Not long after this I did call Rama in. He stood straight at attention, directly behind the table, while listening to orders, never taking his eyes off mine. But now I did notice that his arms drew together, but his hands fumbling behind the flower-pot I could not see. When I dismissed him, about a fifth of the full tin of Craven cigarettes was missing. So, that was the solution! Then Rama is the thief, I thought with some satisfaction, and my Brahmin, who read the *Gita*, was innocent. But at the end of that month my food expenses totaled up to about three hundred rupees—that did seem too much! Everybody had been telling me that food was so much cheaper here than in the States, but this was certainly not inexpensive. So now I started inquiring. Hesitatingly, I approached several Indian friends, hoping that they would not take my questions as pryingly personal. They exclaimed over my expenses:

"Why, Mrs. Das, you are paying at least three times too much!"

Very reluctantly, I had to come to the conclusion that my Brahmin had been cheating me outrageously. The bazaar prices he quoted were far above actual prices.

I hardly knew what to do, for by now my kitchen was fairly clean and peace reigned everywhere. Balakram, did his work well, studied hard over his English, and was so glowingly content and willing, that I was helpless. The very day before I had this fatal discussion with my Hindu friends, Balakram had come to me dressed in a new suit, new shirt and cap. The shirt had bright orange and sky-blue silken stripes, and the coat was of stout, washable material.

Looking at him I had actually felt a thrill of pride over his changed appearance. There seemed to be so much more confidence and

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manliness in it.

I had thought the price for this had come out of his wages. Now I knew it had come out of his pilfering. I reflected. Everyone told me it was the common custom of cooks in India to charge the masters more than they pay themselves, as much more as each master will allow. They do not consider it thieving, they consider it in the light of the commission of a broker, or middleman.

Somehow I could not regret what had happened. I saw it had been largely my own stupidity in insisting upon overruling accepted customs.

From that time on, in fairness to the servants, I too, put a padlock on my doors. A month later, however, I fell ill, and for four whole weeks in the growing heat of approaching summer I lay flat on my back, unable to move. During all that time, I was on a diet of fruit and milk, and my husband alone kept on with his normal meals. During this time, of course, there were no guests at the table. The servants had claimed to be strict vegetarians, not even touching eggs. Yet, at the end of that month, Balakram came to my bed:

"Memsahib, the egg-man is here and wants his money, and master has not yet come."

"How much is it?" I said, and reached under the pillow.

"Thirteen rupees, eight annas," he said.

"What!" I exclaimed, "how many eggs did you get?"

"Eighteen dozens, Memsahib."

Eighteen dozen eggs for my husband alone! Brave man! Padlocks had not guarded against this novel exploitation!

I had occasion to discuss all these little domestic tribulations with some of my un-Westernized friends. Patiently, they explained to me that I must not take this unreliability and thievishness as typical of Indian servants. In Indian households, especially in smaller towns and in the country, servants form part of the family, children's children sometimes serving for generations the same family of masters. Their wages were half of what I was paying, but on the other hand they had a feeling of belonging, of being taken care of, and of their children

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being looked after equally in good and bad days, from year to year. In such cases the interests of master and servants were so intimately linked that there was no object in betrayal of trust on either side.

Moreover, Indian housewives knew to a dot the value of everything, the need for everything; under their care and under their rule, there were no such amazing temptations towards thieving as I in my ignorance offered.

As for the servants' uncleanly habits which distressed me, there again I was assured that it came largely from the confusion arising out of an attempt to mix Eastern and Western methods of housekeeping. The carelessness and uncleanliness of servants had its main cause in the following factor: foreigners were in the habit of employing low-castes and very frequently out-castes for work in their kitchens, while the rule in all better, orthodox Hindu households is to employ Brahmin cooks.

Preparing and eating food is a rite worthy of the greatest care. The women of an orthodox household put on a special, spotlessly clean *sari* just for the preparation of food. They call their Brahmin cooks respectfully "Maharaj." How could they then do otherwise but scorn the foreigner who apparently was not above touching food from the hands of the unclean and low-born?

This scorn of the white man's eating habits, the servants share, no matter under how much obsequiousness to the white masters it may be hidden. It is this attitude that leads the Hindu servant to treat with little regard for purity the preparation of the food of his white master. Just so long as the dishes taste and look tempting when they reach the table, what matter if the water was not clean in which they were cooked, since the master apparently cares for appearances only ? What matter if the food was not pure, since the servants themselves would not share that food?

As time went on, I found all this to be absolutely true. The less I attempted to impose on my kitchen Western methods which confused century-old traditions, the more satisfaction I got. The nearer I approached to Hindu ways, the more my servants felt at home, and

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the greater care they exercised. The less I concerned myself with "elevating" them, the better they served me.

As for the thieving that had actually taken place in my kitchen and store-rooms, and which was to keep up in varying degrees for years, I did not see why I should take that so seriously. White people in India, without consulting Indians, have apportioned to themselves such enormous salaries and such lordly ways of living, for which Indian money pays, that it did not seem so very wrong when under-paid Indian servants took their own means of getting a slice of this back into Indian hands in "commissions."

The more I realized the appalling poverty of India's millions, the more I wondered why all who were starving did not help themselves, in small ways, without asking, as the foreigner did in large ways!

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CHAPTER THREE

A few incidents of the first fresh weeks in India are indelibly imprinted on my mind. One morning on a shopping tour I entered an Indian-managed dry-goods shop in Bombay during a hot, quiet hour. I walked noiselessly on rubber-soled shoes. In the cool dim interior there was one single shopper, an English officer, with his back turned towards me. The air around him fairly reeked with the most martial swearing. He had sent a shop assistant outside for a special cool drink, but the man had not returned quickly enough to suit him. I was aghast and indignant; it was the first instance I had witnessed of unfeeling abuse of an Indian by a white. I am certain no Englishman would ever dream of speaking like that in a shop managed by his own race. Hearing my voice addressing a clerk, he whirled around, jerked off his helmet and started to apologize:

"I did not hear you — I had no idea. . . ."

I made no reply, but looked through him. He had the grace to flush a deeper red than his ordinary whiskey-and-soda color.

That very afternoon I dressed myself like an Indian woman in sari and sandaled bare feet. My husband and three other men took me to visit the temple of Mumbai-devi, the presiding deity of the city. (Bombay is an English corruption of Mumbai.) Without any hindrance we were permitted to pass the outer gates. There were a great many worshipers present, a bit puzzled by my appearance, but, without exception, friendly. The priests even went so far as to make a lane for me through the worshipers who thronged in front of the shrine, so that I might have a clear, full view of the large silver statue of the goddess. It was not until we had entirely circled the sacred tank and were on the point of leaving the temple by another gate that one Western-clad Hindu objected to my presence.

From there we went to another Hindu temple built half-way up Malabar Hill toward the Hanging Gardens. Here again the priests showed me exquisite courtesy, opening some of the chambers so that I might see the temple's treasure-stores. When I glimpsed Lakshmi on a splendidly carved silver peacock I exclaimed in delight and unthinkingly stepped

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across the threshold to see better. There was an exclamation of consternation from one of the priests, but his superior, after a second's hesitation, quieted both him and me. "It is all right; now that you are there, have a good look." When they learned that I was interested in painting, they assured me that any time I cared to come and work within the temple compound they would do everything in their power to make things comfortable for me and to see that I was not annoyed.

From that temple we went down toward the seashore and to the Hindu burning-grounds. There it took some persuasion on the part of my companions, but at last I was permitted to enter, a privilege that has been granted to practically no Europeans. It was a clean solemn place, but there was none of the heavy gloom that pervades Western funerals and cemeteries. I remarked upon this, and from the replies of my friends I gathered that Hindus are too convinced of the continuation of life to grieve over the dead shell that once held it.

Here again, as at the two temples, I met with such friendly courtesy that the morning's episode of the Englishman in the shop stood out in glaring contrast. I was later to observe dozens of similar examples of rough, overbearing and offensive treatment of Hindus by Englishmen.

Yet there were many things about my Indian friends that like-wise disturbed me from the beginning. I grieved over their indifference toward the sufferings of the starving pariah dogs and cats that filled the alleys of Bombay. Their indifference to filthy surroundings and their lack of feeling for beauty troubled me equally.

The majority of middle-class Indians did not seem to care how they lived. Later on, I came to realize that frightful economic pressure, due to a number of very complex causes, accounts for this to a large extent, but not wholly so, for even very wealthy people are content to live in cramped and squalid surroundings. If they did anything at all toward what they called improving matters, it was to fill the small rooms with shoddy Western furniture and hang their walls with frightful oleographs.

One of the men who had accompanied me to the temples was an electrical engineer who lived on Princess Street. This is in a Europeanized

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section of the Indian town, where there are paved streets, electricity and running water. Street and sidewalk are littered most of the time with every kind of refuse, and the house in which this friend lived is typical of thousands of dwellings of the middle class.

His home was one of the first places to which I had been invited to dine. Broad steps, cluttered by the wares of fruit vendors, led to the entrance door. A dirty narrow hallway took one to the stairway at the foot of which lay a crippled sheep, frightfully deformed. The building even boasted an elevator which ran for a few hours each day. The steps of the stairways were of steel, the landings of cement, both indescribably filthy. The numerous servants used these landings for sleeping and dining. Moreover, there was no question that at times, too lazy to go to the flush-toilets at the end of the hallway, they employed the stairway also as a latrine.

It was a five-storied building, separate rooms and flats opening upon a Y-shaped hallway. The triangular space flanked by the ends of the Y formed an open court enclosed by a banister on each landing. The floor of this court, level with the ground, was made of colored mosaic in a very attractive design. When the building was first opened for occupancy many years ago, the owner had decorated this court with lovely potted plants. Within a week he found himself compelled to remove these plants, as most of the pots had been broken by refuse thrown down from all the landings above. Throughout all these years garbage continued to be dumped there; and every morning, in front of all the doors, people stood leaning over the banisters, cleaning their teeth with the chewed end of twigs of the *neem*-tree, and conveniently using the court as a spittoon.

The hallways were almost as filthy as, and more littered than, the stairways. Boxes and bundles were stored there, and lines full of drying laundry swung everywhere. At both ends of the hallway there were three flush-toilets without seats, and a tap-room for scouring and washing. All these were lined with porcelain tiles, but the walls were never cleaned from one year's end to another. Pigeons roamed everywhere, leaving their undisturbed deposits of droppings.

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An Associate Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, England-educated, has been living in this building for sixteen years. Formerly he remonstrated on behalf of all the tenants; now he is resigned, and content when the space before his own door is clean.

All grades of people lived here, some of very moderate means, some millionaires. My new friends, Natubhai and his wife Kamala, occupied a tiny four-room flat on the fourth floor. The rooms could not have been more than ten feet square. The first one contained, in a row against one wall, touching each other, a desk, a chest and a wardrobe, then a tiny table with an ugly colored-tile top, two arm-chairs, and a few stiff-backed ones. This was the room visitors came to generally. The next room held nothing but a settee, ward-robe, and a mattress on the floor covered with a hand-printed khaddar cloth and some round, hard bolsters. This was used during the day both as seat and for noon-day rest. In the next room, from which opened a tiny veranda overlooking the street, there was a huge four-poster bed which took up more than half the width of the room. Flush against the foot of the bed was a cement coping forming an inclosure not more than two feet by three, meant for bathing. The water was kept in some very beautiful hand-worked copper and brass pots and was carried, as was all the water for the household, from that single tap at the end of the hall that served all the families on this landing. Opposite this bathing space, next to the door, there was a European dressing table. This sparsely furnished bedroom was the one occupied by my friends, Natubhai and Kamala. In the fourth room were several cupboards used for storing vessels and food supplies. On top of one of the cupboards, carefully folded up each morning and covered over with a big cloth, there were rolls and rolls of thin mattresses, blankets, and comforters, which were 'spread out on the floors of the first two rooms for the rest of the family to sleep on at night. For besides Natubhai and Kamala and their little son Bachchubhai, several relatives, and very often one or more guests, lived in this tiny flat.

From the room which held the rolled-up bedding, a little alcove opened

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out and was fitted up as kitchen. Here was the huge hammered copper pot fitted with a spout under which a charcoal fire heated the bath-water for the whole family, each member taking at least one bath a day. Over several other charcoal braziers a Brahmin cook prepared the food. He also served the courses onto our plates directly from his pots as we sat ranged in front of the bedding-cupboard and against the opposite wall of the room. We sat cross-legged on mats and carpets, huge brass trays or strips of fresh, smooth banana leaves serving as plates.

The food was very tasty. When the cook tried to fill my plate for the third time, I protested with outflung hands that almost touched him and his pot. He jumped back in violent alarm, upsetting another pot. There was laughter all around. But I was more careful in the future when it was explained to me that had I actually touched him, he would have dropped everything at once and gone off to take a purifying bath before finishing his serving or taking any food of his own.

Even through kitchen and dining room pigeons swarmed to the annoyance of everyone, but no one would have harmed them. They merely kept on preventing them from building nests on the shelves on which were ranged gleaming copper pots, and jars of chutneys, tamarind and *haldi.*

The condition of the house repelled me incredibly, and I was appalled to find my friends living in such ugly cramped quarters. I had never before in my life seen anything to compare with it. Swiss immaculateness in municipal and domestic housekeeping on one hand, and Californian college-town spaciousness and neatness on the other, had kept me from ever having come into actual contact with the ugliness and dirt of the slum sections of Western towns. Theoretically, of course, I knew of them, but that is a different matter. Also, in the West, ugly living conditions always implied poverty, but here there was no question of poverty—my friend was a well-to-do businessman, head of his own firm. The wardrobe in the front room held the wife's collection of beautiful saris, many of them with woven

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borders of pure gold, also the jewelry she did not wear every day: heavy gold bracelets, diamond ear- and finger-rings, and many strings of real pearls. It did not take me long to realize that, although the walls were spotted and defaced, yet all the floors were scrupulously washed each day, and all dishes and everything pertaining to food were cleaned immaculately.

I was the first white woman to enter this home as a guest. Kamala went so far as to serve me some things with her own hands, although she was not yet ready to break caste by actually eating with me.

In this home I experienced most strongly for the first time those violent contrasts and conflicting moods with which India was to tease me in play and in earnest through all the years to come. Nowhere on earth could I have found greater dearth in material beauty of living, nor greater warmth of welcome nor more unbounded hospitality. In the days to come, Natubhai was to turn into the best friend India held for Sarang and me. But years had to pass before I could make my peace with his surroundings.

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CHAPTER FOUR

At the end of our first winter in Bombay, when the heat of the summer was creeping on, Sarang resigned his position to go to try his hand at starting a new sugar enterprise in his own province. We both went to Calcutta, I to accept an invitation from Lady Bose to spend my first summer with her, he to go on to Cuttack, Orissa.

"Do you want your breakfast served in bed or do you want to come down with us?" Lady Bose asked me the first evening in her home in Calcutta. "We take ours at 7 o'clock downstairs on the back veranda."

"I'll be down," I said eagerly.

I was downstairs in plenty of time the following morning, dressed in that cheapest and commonest of Bengali saris, plain white cotton with a bright red border that runs its sweeping and circling lines caressingly over the whole body.

It was a pillared veranda with glazed red brick-floor upon which opened the doors of the living room, of Lady Bose's writing-room, and of the dining room. In a niche in one of the pillars, above a built-in wooden seat, was a lovely ancient sculpture of the sitting Buddha. The arches opened out upon a small walled-in lawn. Along one side of this wall meandered a tiny Japanese miniature garden with rocks, toy bridge and rippling water, this kind of garden-building being one of Doctor Bose's pet pastimes.

Beyond the garden walls there ran on one side a tiny lane, on the other the wide Upper Circular Road. A huge tree stretched one arm from the road into the garden—the gold-mohur, that marvelous shower of scarlet blossoms without a leaf. From the street came the insistent cry of a blind beggar: *"Allah, il Allah!"*

Lady Bose already had visitors. One of the tables on the veranda was set with breakfast things; at the other, a marble-top one, she sat with two women and a gray-bearded man. I found out soon that this was Lady Bose's regular calling hour for her friends, relatives or close associates in work. One of the two ladies was Doctor Bose's

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sister, of whom he later told me: "When we were children, I taught her to throw stones, but soon found out that the only safe place for me to stand was straight in front of her. She could throw in every possible way but straight. There are a few things that you women can never learn!"

On the floor by the side of Lady Bose there were some baskets with fruits and vegetables. On the table stood a huge brass tray and a copper bowl of clear fresh water. She was paring the vegetables for that day's use, rinsing them, freshly peeled and sliced, in the water, then piling them in heaps on the shining tray, exactly proportioned to cover the needs of her own table and of the servants. This was her daily task at which her visitors often helped, the task which she would never have left to servants. Her preparation of oranges especially interested me. She peeled and divided the fruit into sections, and then carefully removed every fragment of membrane and every pip from each segment, leaving the clear meat. With equally great care she prepared all fruit eaten by her husband, to save him both trouble and loss of time.

With this same thoroughness she supervised every detail of her household, caring for the utmost comfort of all its members.

Lunch we had in the dining room, marble-floored and absolutely bare except for some built-in cupboards, a serving table at one end, and a bench that held a fluted brass basin and a water jug for the ablution of hands after eating. For the meal, mats half a yard square, many of them woven in the Widows' Home in which she was interested, were arranged along the walls for each diner.

In front of each mat was placed a low table of the same size and about five inches high which held a shining large brass tray surrounded by bowls of the same metal or of hand-carved stone, and metal tumblers. Rice and curry was served directly onto the large trays, while the small bowls held an array of dal, chutneys, vegetables, and sour milk.

We sat on the mats cross-legged, eating the food Indian-fashion with the tips of our fingers, using our thumb to push the morsel of

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food into the mouth. A dainty eater never messes his fingers beyond the first joint. I soon discovered other points in good table manners: under no condition is the left hand ever used except to touch the glass of water; and a guest is incessantly urged to take more and helped to more whether he wants it or not; only when the two hands are spread out protestingly over the tray does serving cease. No wonder a Madrasi barrister exclaimed at Doctor Bose's repeated urging: "No, Sir, no! I am fulfilled!"

A small slant-eyed Nepalese butler served the rice and curries, but Lady Bose herself kept a vigilant eye and always served some food with her own hands to both husband and guests. Her husband, either utterly absorbed in some train of thought brought from his laboratories, or else eagerly and volubly talking, seemed hardly aware of what he was eating. Lady Bose's greatest and unceasing care was always directed toward him. She was doctor and mother and nurse in one.

A real Bengali meal, I found, invariably starts with some bitter vegetable such as *corolla*, considered health-giving, and ends with either fruit or with sweets such as *sandesh* or *haloa*. But the *chef-d'oeuvre* of the Bengali kitchen is its fish curries, especially when made with the unparalleled *hilsa* fish, and the supremely tasty part of this finest of all fish is its brain. If you are an adept you will know just how to hold your lips to the tiny cerebral cavity and with one suck of the breath have the taste of the gods on your tongue!

Time-consuming though her tasks were in the house, Lady Bose found ample opportunity to do a great deal of marketing herself, and to spend hours every day across the street in the management of her Brahmo Girls' School, and in the nearby Widows' Home, established by her, as well as in the care and expansion of a chain of purdah schools. I was soon to find that many Indian women are educationally and socially active in like manner, and her great, tender and all-inclusive care of every detail of household work for every member of the family I found to be an almost universal aspect in Indian homes. High or low, an Indian woman's first care is her husband;

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the second, the rest of the household.

I never ceased marveling at the steady quietness and thoroughness with which Lady Bose attended to her work, were it routine or for some exceptional occasion. Whether there were expected or unexpected guests, dinners of twenty or of one hundred people, it never seemed to make the slightest difference in her sure planning and even temper.

The West has circus knowledge of the elephant; India has a thorough, intimate knowledge of that magnificent beast. To say of an Indian woman that she walks like an elephant is a great compliment, which I now thoroughly understood as I watched Lady Bose's slow, smooth, steady gait through her innumerable daily tasks. I would have given much to emulate her imperturbable calm.

There were a few things, on the other hand, that Lady Bose envied in my Western background; my training and adaptability of hand, for instance. Some things she wanted me to teach her: the preparation of American salads, cake-making, ironing, and dyeing of silks. At Darjeeling she had an electric oven installed and was soon famous for her cakes.

Over these joint tasks she and I came to know each other very closely. So intimately aquainted with and actively working for the amelioration of the social problems of her own country, she realized better than I did myself some of the difficulties that were facing me.

"You are always to consider this your home," she told me once; and as far as it was in her power to make it so, it was truly a home to me during the years to come, one of the many links to attach me to India with grateful appreciation.

Ever since first meeting both Sir Jagadish and Lady Bose in California, I had been deeply interested in his discoveries about the sensitiveness of plants and metals, about their reactions to depressive and stimulating agents, their "suffering," "joy," "death," in his demonstrations concerning a nervous and circulatory system in plants. It seemed to me so very appropriate that it should be a Hindu scientist who demonstrated this close relationship among human, plant and mineral

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life—it was a scientific approach to the great ancient philosophic dictum of his race that All Life is One. These were discoveries the great scientific interest of which was equaled by their spiritual Significance. I had often wondered if any deep philosophic or religious conviction had urged on Dr. Bose in his investigations.

One day I asked him this question. He replied in the affirmative without hesitation, and gave me many a marvelous glimpse into Hindu philosophy and legend. It was not of that we spoke at first, however. Almost his first words to me in Calcutta were "come and see my garden"; it was not "come and see my instruments." But Lady Bose who mothers him, as he so easily forgets both food and rest, urged, "No, no; tea first!" and tea it was. We sat on the back veranda level with the small lawn. Cake bu- tter and jam there was on the table, but also *rossogullas* and *sandesh*,, that most famous of Bengali sweets about which even in California my Indian friends had waxed so enthusiastic. Dr. Bose helped himself to a big plate of *muri*—the puffed rice that some American breakfast food company "invented" some years ago. It isn't shot from a gun in India—nothing half so dramatic—it is quite simply rice placed on heated sand.

Although I worked with Dr. Bose for several months on his manuscript and made drawings for him, it is not of the wonderful instruments and experiments in his laboratories that I shall write, much as they thrilled me and deepened my awe of the mysteries of life. It is rather of the poet and artist. For as such he impressed me most forcibly in his intimate life. Considering the vast amount of research and laborious publication to his credit, I imagined him one-sidedly absorbed. But the sense of beauty and of the dramatic are ever present in him.

He is as much artist as scientist. His living room has a marvelous carved ceiling of lotus interwoven with sacred geese and other design, stained in black, gold, bronze and deep reds. Below this ceiling runs a frieze by Nanda Lal Bose—copies from Ajanta frescoes, and symbolical paintings executed according to Dr. Bose's own suggestions—an unrollment of the panorama of life: hope, ambition, struggle, defeat,

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resignation, victory, and final merging in the lotus pool of eternal peace.

The outside of his Institute bears beautiful ancient motifs of decoration, and the ceiling of his big lecture hall is an exact copy of one of the large ceiling-circles of Ajanta. The woodwork of the hall is beautifully carved: doors are Kashmir screens, the entrance gate is an old monastery door from Nepal. Such love of art, such planning, is unfortunately rare in Indian building today. It is the most forceful expression of his great pride in being a Hindu.

In our talks in the garden he gave me a wealth of stories out of his own experience and out of Hindu lore. I have seen his eyes dimmed with tears when speaking of some beautiful legendary act of supreme sacrifice, or of the devotion of friends of his such as Sister Nivedita.

But there were times when Western aloofness, criticism, and skepticism stirred their wings within me. At such times I disliked the overstressing of authority, the touch of subservience shown him by subordinates, the everlasting touching of his feet by visitors. I should have liked to see him surround himself with equals instead, for equals there are. It seemed to me that the lack of this affected him. I felt a painful cleavage between his expression of patriotism and his holding aloof from his own countrymen.

In the tropics, humans seem more prone than elsewhere to express thoughts and feelings in beautiful words as far easier than embodying them in tangible action. I shall never forget one glorious dusk under the trees of the Calcutta Institute.

Dr. Bose was especially eloquent that evening—words of cosmic significance rolled out in splendid rhythm and tone. Some Western devil of doubt pricked me, and without reflection I bent down swiftly and picked up from the grass one of the innumerable tiny frogs that flood gardens during the rains. In his flight of fancy Dr. Bose paid no heed to my action. Wordlessly, I held out my closed hand to him. Suddenly arrested, and not a little puzzled, he held out his. I placed the tiny cold creature in his palm. He dropped it with an exclamation of disgust and annoyance. I laughed: "Where is your

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cosmic realization of the unity of all created things?"

Dr. Bose walked away without a word, and did not speak to me again for hours.

Almost an identical occurrence happened a few years later between Dilip Kumar Roy, the musician, and myself. He and I had been talking of the unseen realms; he was giving me marvelous glimpses into the thought of Aurobindo Ghose, the hermit philosopher. Just after one of our discussions, I brought him a very exquisite beetle and placed it in his hands without any preliminaries. This time there was no deviltry whatever behind my action; it was simply the expectation of having Dilip * share my joy in the exquisite creature.

With an instinctive gesture of disgust he flung it clear across the room.

I was hurt and indignant, and pointed out to him the contrast between his action and our late discussions. Where Doctor Bose had walked away in silence, Dilip tried to reason:

"How absurd of you to confuse a philosophy of life with a personal reaction toward a beetle!"

But was it so absurd? On the temple hill of Kapilas, in .Dhenkanal, the native state of my husband, hermit monks have dwelt in tiny clearings in the thickest jungle, incorporating to the utmost of their conception the ancient philosophy that all life is one. Within the memory of man, not one instance is known of a single one of these hermits being harmed by wild beast or serpent. They have made their complete peace with all creation.

Everywhere in India I was becoming aware of this strong cleavage and inner disharmony among intellectuals between their ancient philosophic beliefs and present action. This is one of the

• The Hindu name system differs radically from the Western. It has no family names in our sense. The names of father and son, or brother and brother, give no indication that they belong to the same family—except where English influence has crept in. Orthodox Hindus never speak of "Mr. Tagore," or "Mr. Roy." The given name only is used,

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but it may be modified by a term of honor, which varies in different parts of India and with different degrees of familiarity. For example: In Bengal the poet Rabindranath Tagore is called "Rabi-babu"; in Bombay "bhai" (brother—here title of honor, not relationship) is added, as in "Natu-bhai"; in the North "Lala" is used as prefix, and "ji" is added: Lajpat Rai is "Lala Lajpat Rai," or more familiarly "Lalaji" only. "Sri" (lord, master) is a formal prefix which may be used before all men's names, and is the all-India equivalent of "Mr." Names of women give no indication of the family or husband to which they belong. "Bai" (sister) or "devi" (goddess) are added, according to locality. Examples: "Kamala-bai" "Urmilla-devi." In close intimacy or friendship all honor-titles are omitted, as "Dilip," "Sarang"

interesting problems of modern India. The stories which Dr. Bose told me bore on many of his country's complexities. I believe it was part of his intention to lead me through them to a deeper sympathy with things Indian, but most of the time the sheer love of telling a story ran away with him.

I give two of them, jotted down by me immediately afterwards. The first is typical of his fanciful story-telling, the second has a very real bearing on changing social customs.

"I had a relative up in the Sura hills in East Assam, a surgeon. Often people were brought to him wounded or killed by wild animals. Once a man was brought in and he could not detect a single wound on his body; yet the man was dead. An enraged wild elephant had played shuttle-cock with him.

"First, the man was knocked down, with the trunk, but instead of trampling on him the elephant gave him a kick with his forefoot which sent him backwards against the hind leg. The hind leg kicked him back, and between the two legs the body was kept tossing till every bone was broken, though the skin was not."

I looked at Dr. Bose a bit doubtfully. He answered my look seriously:

"Elephants do this only when they are very, very enraged!"

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Then Dr. Bose told me stories of a very famous Hindu athlete and animal trainer who had retired as a *sadhu* many years before; one incident out of this man's life had aroused his curiosity and sympathy. This was the story as Dr. Bose told it to me:

"Highest among all Brahmins there is a subcaste, who intermarry only among themselves. As there are more men than women, barter has sprung up. Huge gifts of treasure and money, thousands of rupees, are given to the father of a girl before the wedding. The highest bidder wins out.

"There was Kiron Rao, a straight honest lad. But he was poor and through long years of toil had only been able to save up seven hundred rupees. Who was there who would give his daughter for such a paltry sum?

"Kiron was very lonely, and Kiron was very despondent. One morning the marriage broker appeared at his door with a smile of promise on his face.

"'I have found just what you want—a girl not quite so fair as the lotus, it is true, and not quite so beautiful as the new moon, but a girl with eyes like a pool at midnight, and a voice like the bulbul's song, and—best of all—her father is willing to give her to you for only seven hundred rupees.'

"Kiron parted most happily with his money and the bride was brought from a very distant village and they were married. Kiron, very contented with his bargain, loved his gentle wife dearly. Then a girl was born—woe, woe, the gods are angry, cried the relatives. But the young father adored the wee mite and was deliriously happy.

"Then one day a Brahmin came, his only enemy, and spoke: 'Do you know whom you have married? You have married a widow.' 'You lie, you lie!' shouted Kiron aghast.

"'I do not lie,' said the old Brahmin sternly, and looking into his enemy's eye, Kiron knew the truth had been told. His enemy had patiently ferreted out that this girl had been married at the age of three and become a widow at four, and was many years later remarried by her greedy father at what the latter thought a safe

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distance.

"'You must give up your wife, or I'll expose you,' said Kiron's enemy implacably. Such exposure would inevitably have brought about outcasting, which meant the loss of all social intercourse, of work—in fact, virtual starvation and death for his child, wife, and himself.

"Stunned by the revelation, Kiron could not find it in his loyal heart to cast aside these two beloved beings and retain for himself the privilege of caste; nor could he face the terrible consequences of ostracism. In agony of soul he went to Chatterjee, the great athlete.

"'Master, what shall I do?'

"Chatterjee felt very sympathetic with Kiron and was indignant at the imposition practiced upon the honest man by the father of the girl and angry at the threats of exposure from Kiron's enemy.

"'Leave it to me, I'll arrange it,' he said most confidently, and Kiron returned home, vastly comforted.

"Shortly afterwards, Chatterjee invited all the most prominent Brahmins of the community to a feast at his house. He arranged the feast in a great hall which had only one door. Mats were spread along all the walls of the hall, servants had poured perfumed water over the hands of the guests, and they sat in greedy but dignified rows awaiting the bringing in of the sumptuous repast. Chatterjee took his seat on a mat next to the door.

"First came a Brahmin cook with a huge pot in his hand. From this he placed handfuls of snowy rice on the vast brass plates of the guests. Then followed other servants, and then, bearing in her trembling hand a platter of hilsa curry—this woman, this mortal sinner, the remarried widow! To let her wait upon them, to accept food from her hands and eat it meant being outcasted along with her.

"Kiron's enemy jumped to his feet; so did several other Brahmins. Uneasily they looked around, preparing to leave. Chatterjee's face darkened: This was proof that Kiron's enemy had babbled! Then he assumed a smile:

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" 'Oh, you are not feeling well? You wish to leave? I am so grieved.'
"He drew himself up beside the door to his full huge stature, the muscles of his bare upper body and arms swelling and his eyes shooting fire.

" 'As you see, this is the only door; come out, any who wish to go and do not feel well enough to partake of my food.'

"His guests looked at him, and at the killing promise of his fists; they looked at the woman; they looked at each other and quickly dropped their eyes. Without a word they sat down again, Kiron's enemy giving the cue—and ate! There was never again any talk of outcasting the woman."

This story that Doctor Bose told me must have been known to many people. It illustrates how caste is breaking down, and is only one of hundreds of instances that were told me and of dozens which came under my own personal experience.

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CHAPTER FIVE

At the end of my visit, I left Calcutta to join my husband at Cuttack, in Orissa. Sir Jagadish and Lady Bose are members of the Brahmo Samaj, a great religious eclectic reform society that has thrown all caste and purdah to the winds. The members of this society and the liberal Brahmin group of Calcutta to which the poet Tagore belongs, form the most intellectually advanced, keenest and freest group in India.

I could have experienced no greater contrast than to go from them directly to Orissa, the most backward and orthodox region of all India. Here, caste still reigned supreme and purdah was unbroken. Yet even here I felt the brewing of social ferment. Through my husband's friends I was invited into many a secluded home, sharing the men's feast as the first woman, peeped at with great curiosity and wonder by the women from behind purdah, and visiting them afterwards in the *zenana*. Most of the diners were caste-men, yet even here in orthodox Cuttack there was no talk of outcasting although they had dined with me, a *mlèchche*.

Even the women, though they themselves would not have eaten with me, did not seem to mind their men-folk doing so and were friendly and eager towards me.

I started housekeeping in a house which I had chosen because I had seen a troop of marvelous Hanuman monkeys—gray with black faces, hands, and tails, and a white ruff around the neck— leap onto the compound wall from an overhanging tree, and race along it and all over the roofs. A few weeks later I had learned to curse the beautiful brutes for their destructiveness, especially when one of them laid open the entire cheek of my pet hound, Blackie.

As curtains and draperies, I used the beautiful hand-blocked cotton prints of ancient design that are so distinctive of India.

"Why do you use these cheap, common curtains?" my rich Hindu friends asked me.

"Because I prefer them to the Western machine-made fabrics that

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you are so fond of nowadays," I would reply, and started my campaign to reawaken them to the beauty of their own ancient art.

I began to feel a bit at home, though I missed the total absence of any chance of companionship with other women. Not one among the women of the homes of my husband's friends spoke English, and I knew no Oriah. But some students and some young professors from the nearby Ravenshaw College fell into the habit of coming for discussions to my tea-table. Then we would commence reading, plays preferably, and continue till late at evening.

I had a small well-selected library. My young friends read avidly through my most treasured books, many of which were not kept in the college library. I saw that they got a good many books on the woman and sex questions into their hands, such standbys of mine as Olive Schreiner, Ellen Key, Havelock Ellis, Forel, besides a whole group of modern social plays, some sound books on sociology and economics, and God knows what. The contagion spread, my books circulated, others were drawn into our discussions. It was as keen and wide-awake a group of young minds as I had the pleasure of coming into contact with anywhere in the world.

But, of course, the difference in tradition and surroundings had left its stamp. Our discussions very often started over little daily happenings, either in my own household, or out of their lives. I was very eager to be initiated into the customs of their orthodox society. Both pleased and amused, and knowing my genuine sympathy, they would regale me. Musu would start:

"The *zamindar* of Chaudwar wants Dinesh as son-in-law. He says his daughter is very fair and highly educated. He has offered in dowry five thousand rupees, and three hundred tolas worth of silver, five hundred of gold in ornaments, and as a special inducement a personal gift of a gold wrist watch for the happy bridegroom."

"Oh, yes," Tuan laughed, "Dinesh will discuss Schopenhauer with her, and Havelock Ellis—she has had just two years in Miss Bank's school!"

Dinesh seemed pricked, but laughed it off. "What nonsense! Who

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wants to talk philosophy to a wife? My sister-in-law's aunt's neighbor has seen the girl, and says she is the very color of the moon, her eyes are dancing like the *khanjana*, her eyebrows arched like Arjuna's bow, and her lips caressing as the *bandhuli* flower— that's something, if you ask me!"

"If you are going to believe the matchmakers," Ananda scoffed, "all the girls are as fair as the moon."

I sat back amused and enjoying myself. Hindu men practically never mention their women-folk; it is bad manners to question or discuss intimate affairs. My young friends were doing it in defiance of the old taboos. They were, as most of modern educated Indian youth, rebellious against the old system of being married off willy-nilly to a girl whom they would see for the first time after the irrevocable knot was tied. Some of them were already married, more or less happily, some were trying to hold out against the old system, but wondering where they could possibly meet or choose any girl in this strictly purdah town.

"The Judge of Jagatpur has made an offer to my father," Ananda went on, "of a phonograph, a real platinum watch, and eight thousand rupees. I could manage with the watch, but it's those eight thousand that make me suspicious. She must be ugly or very dark Of course I am no beauty myself . . . but still –"

Another day a member of the legislative assembly had offered to pay all costs to send Hari to England for four years' study—of course only after the first binding ceremony. His daughter also, it appeared, was so highly educated, and even traveled—she knew the English alphabet, and had seen Delhi from behind the veils of purdah! This was indeed temptation to Hari, who longed to see the West, and whose people were too poor to send him. Mightn't it almost be worth while to risk not knowing your wife? A trip to Europe was a sure thing and the memory and advantages remained forever, while, after all—well, look at the West where the young could have those marvelous courting experiences of which literature was full to the

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brim—why was there so much divorce? Love was apparently not such a sure bet, even where you could do your own choosing. On the other hand, under the old Hindu system, many and many a marriage did end in deep and tender affection, even if they never knew the thrills of a *grande passion!*

I made up my mind that Hari would be our first renegade among this group of young men. I understood too well to blame him.

Then came another offer to Dinesh—Dinesh the fair of skin, the lion-waisted, with the neck of a conch shell and feet and hands like lotus, scion of a great and rich house. To Dinesh went the laurels—the highest bid had come to him, ten thousand rupees, and a radio outfit! Who could withstand this? Although he himself described the offer in fun with many flourishes on my veranda, still I could feel a secret pride in his face and voice over being bid for so highly.

It was Dinesh, loudest in proclaiming his scorn for the compulsion of the old Hindu form of marriage, who was the first to go the way of all obedient Hindu sons!

From among all my observations concerning marriage in this orthodox Hindu society, several things stood out clearly. First and foremost—no people are more color-conscious than high-caste Hindus! Fairness was the universally stressed and desired quality. A fair skin would land a girl safely in matrimony even if her dowry were low. Solid heavy gold had to weigh in the counter-scales to enable the humiliated father of a very dark-skinned girl to find a suitable husband.

Secondly, considerations of money far outweighed considerations of education or accomplishment. I heard one unfortunate father (professor and well-known historian) of too many girls bemoan the fact. His daughters, fully grown, were really accomplished and educated, but one young man, on whom he had had his eye as a desirable son-in-law, had been married off suddenly to the ignorant fifteen-year-old daughter of a village landowner, because a greater dowry was offered than the three thousand rupees which the professor could manage to scrape together.

Thirdly, misrepresentations of facts in marriage proposals were common. Strict purdah made investigations very difficult. A go-

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between would be sent to find out if the jewel-daughter were really quite so fair as a lotus and wise; as a serpent as she was represented to be. But a few rupees judiciously placed could easily induce a go-between to mistake a very dark skin under a yellow haldi-paste coating as a loveliest moon-gold tint, and dullness of mind for sweetness of temper. The go-between was safe, for the proof of the pudding could not be brought to test until after the eating. Once the indissoluble knot was tied and the young bride had become irrevocably part of the new household, the pride of the family would hesitate to admit to outsiders the shortcomings of the latest daughter-in-law. Recriminations would be reserved for nearest relatives on both sides. It is, in this connection, as significant as it is amusing to know that in Bengali, for instance, one of the worst insults is to call anyone a "*shala,*" literally, "brother-in-law!"

Then there was a growing opposition to early marriages, and to the marriage of older men with young girls. My young friend Musu, who himself had married in the old style with all due caste regulations and whose family compelled him to keep his wife in purdah, had news that an old relative of his had made arrangements to remarry. This relative was the father of grown children, and his wife had died but two months before. The young girl whom he wanted to marry was just fifteen years old. The family of my young friend owned most of the motor buses of that town. His relative sent word that he wanted one of these buses on a certain date for his marriage party. Indignantly, my young friend refused to let him have any conveyance whatever.

"If he wants to marry, he'll walk," Musu exclaimed with heat, "and not one of our family will attend his wedding!"

I was delighted at this proof positive that even among the most orthodox, disapproval of such marriages was waxing strong enough to arouse an attitude that amounted almost to ostracism of the offender.

But social ferment was stirring not only in the world of men.

One day a tightly shuttered carriage drew up before my veranda. It had very much the shape of a square box slung high on metal-

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tired wheels. There were two solid wooden sliding doors and above each seat a tiny shutter with slats that let air in but permitted not the faintest glimpse of the occupant. This is the common *band-gharri* or purdah-carriage of India, and about as stuffy, hot, and uncomfortable a conveyance as can be imagined.

The doors slid open just wide enough to let out my friend Banu and to give me a glimpse of an eager face in a brilliant orange sari that drew back instantly at my gaze. Banu slipped into the living room and asked hurriedly: "Are you alone?"

"Yes, my husband won't be here for an hour or so."

"I have brought you Vimala, my niece by marriage. She has pestered me for a long time with this request. It has been possible only because she happened to visit us today while both my brother and mother are away, so we have taken the chance of slipping out. She has heard of you and knows some of your articles and is convinced that you will be able to do something for her. The fact is that she has been married against her will and wants to break away, at least to get more education." "Are there no children?"

"No, although she has been married three years." "Who is her husband?"

"A man over thirty, almost twice her age. He is one of Gandhi's followers and holds a big position in the Nationalist movement." "Does he know of this and what does he say to it?" "She has nothing to hope from him. They do not seem to speak the same language." "What on earth can I do?" I asked with some consternation. Banu smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "Well, bring her in," I told him.

A slight figure with bent head slipped into the room. The instant she realized no one else was present, there was a change, and I at once saw that this was not the ordinary, timid, mute, adolescent girl of India. She threw back her veil with slim hand and quick gesture. I looked into a pair of very beautiful glowing eyes. Vimala was an amazingly attractive girl, her greatest charm lying in the intense mobility of expression.

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She broke out at once into a stream of vernacular and then turned her face appealingly to Banu. He served as interpreter.

Vimala had taught herself Bengali and a little English, although she was a bit too shy to try the latter on me. With the help of Banu, and without the knowledge of her nearest relatives, she had somewhat familiarized herself with modern ideas, especially those concerning marriage. In her own vernacular she had read and studied all there was available. With amazement I learned that this girl had even had the audacity to attempt writing. From behind the veil of her seclusion she had followed the trend of events and had actually sent an article to Gandhi's paper which he had at once published. The kernel of the article was this: "You Nationalists are clamoring for freedom from the British. Then why do you not give us, the women of India, within our own social life the freedom for which you clamor from the British?"

Vimala's eyes sparkled and her words fairly spluttered in eagerness when she tried to make me understand how deeply she felt that demand.

I looked at her in admiration. I had never dreamed that such aspiration, independence of thought and longing for free play could possibly spring up behind the strict seclusion of the veil. Only those who know as I do what unlimited obedience and reverence to a husband is ingrained into an Indian girl from her earliest babyhood could be as astounded as I at the freedom with which she confided to me. She had wanted to study, she had not wanted to marry, and particularly she had not wanted this husband. "I hate him," she flashed out, "and I won't live with him. If you won't help me, I will run away." She looked me squarely in the eyes and I could see that she knew what that would mean and that she held it over me, the free Western woman, as a sort of desperate threatening appeal. Such running away without help and preparation, from a sheltered niche in Hindu society, cannot possibly mean anything but being driven to prostitution.

Then she broke out into a new flow of vernacular towards Banu.

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I could see that he was at a loss and embarrassed, and would not translate. "Do tell her," she urged him.

"Her husband has infected her," he forced himself to state bluntly, "and she cannot even get treatment."

I was appalled at the desperation that could drive a Hindu girl to ask that I should be told this. I felt that the courage and character of this girl were so unusual that were she given the chance to develop and be trained, she could be turned into a great worker for social reform. My heart acted and my mind rebelled at the stupidity of this society, with its rigid seclusion of women that lets such splendid material go to waste.

I determined at once to do all in my power to help her get away and go on with her education. The moment I had expressed this, she changed like poplar leaves in an April wind. She was all silvery sheen, delighted and happy as a youngster.

Just then my husband came onto the veranda. Force of habit made her leap to her feet, poised for flight into the inner rooms. I laughed, and put my hand reassuringly on her arm.

"Stay, meet my husband. If you are going to be such a strong, free girl, start right now to break through the old barriers."

I could see that she was uncertain, yet eager to try. It was amazing to me to see what a tumult of uncertainty and emotion leapt to life in this Hindu girl at the mere thought of such daring—daring to meet a man who was neither husband nor father nor brother.

When my husband stepped into the room she drew her veil over her face and turned suddenly mute. I made the few necessary introductions but the veil remained drawn and that busy tongue silent. The two men started to talk in the vernacular on her account, and my husband actually succeeded in drawing a few monosyllabic replies from her in a hesitant, quivering voice. Its tone struck me suddenly. I stepped over to her, slipped one arm over her shoulder with a warm hug and with my other hand I stripped the veil from her face. She made a lightning, desperate clutch for it and was incredibly embarrassed, yet there was laughter in her eyes. My husband was quick

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to respond in a genial vein and soon there was a brisk conversation in the vernacular among the three of them. I watched with pleasure how Vimala expanded under the exciting newness and interest of this experience of talking freely to a man who stood in no personal relationship to her. I sat back in silence, busily planning what I could do to see to it that she would not be compelled to slip back again into seclusion and silence and hopelessness.

There was a sudden darkening in the room. Twilight was falling. She jumped up in amazement. It was a new experience to her that time could pass so quickly in conversation.

We stepped out onto the veranda, and Vimala made a move to reenter the carriage.

"No, Vimala, I'll walk along with you. If you really choose, you will not much longer have to pass through the glowing sunsets in darkened carriages."

I put her arm into mine and drew her along and motioned the carriage to follow us. She gazed around in her trepid eagerness. We passed along the dusty road that glowed brilliantly red in that fey fire of the after-sunset. Huge, deep green trees sheltered the roads. Beyond, the grass was burned sere. Towards the west, over the burnished river, the sky was a vast incredible glory of orange and reds. Higher up, liquid streaks of greenish-yellow lay softly across the heavens like a new hope. Behind us deep purple shades of the night were gathering, and the dark shapes of known things were wavering and melting away.

The little slip of a girl by my side lifted her head as we walked along, and drew in her breath in a sort of sharp, ecstatic wonder. I read in her eyes that she felt that she was walking on in the unimaginable glory of a sunset and toward the freedom of a new day. Now and then some peasant or a returning sweeper coming toward us smilingly made way and touched hands to forehead in greeting. On the face of each I saw surprise at meeting this richly clad, high-caste girl, walking barefoot in the deep red dust of the common road. Their feet were encrusted with the grime of years and the skin of the soles was thick and black and cracked. Heavy, rather uncouth brass or

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silver ornaments weighed them down. Her feet were tender and beautifully shaped. No shoes had ever deformed them. No rough contact had ever marred them. They were as carefully massaged and tended as her hands. The nails glowed a bright red, the soles of her feet were painted red. Finely worked rings adorned her toes and around the ankles there fell the soft plait of gold from which dangled innumerable bells that gave a faint delightful tinkling at every step. To the unveiled low-caste women that passed us on the street the veil was the prerogative of high caste. The low-caste woman had no time to tend her body, could never even feed it to the point of staying the pangs of hunger. What to her meant the contact of foot with the common road? She could merely wonder that a high-born lady should so disgrace herself as to go unveiled and on foot. But to Vimala, the contact of the red dust of the road with her beautifully rounded and widely spaced toes sent a thrill through the whole body. It meant broken prison walls and open roads.

As we neared the houses of the town, suddenly two acquaintances passed us. They came upon us unawares. She recoiled like a frightened bird and flashed the veil across her face. On the faces of the two men I read astonishment and disapproval. They did the only thing that a decent Hindu gentleman of those parts could do in the face of such shameless behavior: they turned their heads and walked passed us in embarrassment and without greeting. Then I could see the courage of my little friend wilting visibly. Bravely, she went on a while longer, but with faltering, hesitating steps and perturbed movements. She kept fingering her veil, one moment throwing it back, the other folding it across her face more tightly. Finally, she turned to me with an appealing gesture, and dropped her hands. Her voice faltered. "I cannot go on." Wordlessly, I put my arms around her, and we waited for the carriage. I helped her in and myself drew the shutters and waited while the carriage rolled away. Then I plodded back through the deep red dust towards my own home, more deeply anxious and moved than I had ever been in India.

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I walked on in such perturbance that for once I forgot to keep my usual twilight lookout on the road before me in the wary effort to distinguish between dropped ends of bullock cart ropes and snakes basking in the last warmth of the deep dust.

Suddenly there was a sharp, swift twisting. Looking down in frozen horror I saw the black-and-white striped body of a *chitti* throbbing around my ankle. But by pure accident I had stepped on the head and it lay crushed and harmless under foot.

That night as I recounted to my husband what had been told me by Vimala and how I had been asked and had promised to help, he advised against it with unusual warmth and firmness.

"You cannot antagonize society so, and you will ruin my work if you meddle in other people's affairs."

I felt the justice of this from his point of view, and kept silent. But I kept silent with rising resentment and angered heart. If I could not stretch out my hand to help this Hindu girl who was caught in the meshes of custom and struggling to get free; if I, a free Western woman who disbelieved with her heart and mind and soul in the continuance of purdah, was not to lift my finger, then what was I doing here? What was I in India for?

I felt with a sharp realization that, feeling and believing as I did, I should be free to act. Yet, having joined my life to that of a Hindu, could I retain the unattached Western woman's manner of thinking and freedom of action?

I lay long into the night, awake inside my mosquito curtain, listening to the strange call of the fever bird, in agony of mind and heart. What, after all, did I know of actual local conditions? The eagerness of this girl for freedom I had felt and warmed toward, but what did I know of her strength to gain it and to hold it, once gained? What if I merely helped to uproot her? What if I merely turned her into flotsam on a bitter flood?

Was I so sure if I, in my Western blindness, walked into the red dust of these accumulated social customs of centuries, that I could place my heel on the head of the snake? Might not I, instead of bringing help, be

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the means merely of getting us both stung to death? *

Through Vimala had come my deepest insight into the problem of the seclusion of women. A revealing aspect of the question of caste and outcaste came to me within my own household.

Cuttack has an army of municipal sweepers, both men and women, whose duty it is to clean all toilets that open onto outside lanes or walls. These sweepers do not enter private compounds. They are paid about seven rupees ($2.31) a month, and consequently their condition is very pitiable. Not infrequently they are too poor to own more than the one cloth that is twisted around their body, and as they have access to restricted water supplies only, they are unable to keep themselves clean. Add to this the disagreeable conditions of their work, and I could soon understand how it is they have in time formed an "untouchable" class.

Toilets are built of stone or cement or even mud-walls in the following manner: The floor of a tiny compartment contains an opening which is flanked by two raised brick-shaped stones big enough to rest one's feet on and to keep them from contact with the watersoaked floor. This, and at most a bucket of water, is all that constitutes the ordinary Indian toilet. The space below the floor has a small opening in the outside wall (for such toilets are usually built against the garden or outside house-wall) and it is the duty of sweepers to come at least once a day, and—with bits of broken earthen water pots—scrape up the refuse and carry it away to some dumping ground in uncovered baskets. It is nothing unusual to pass on some road a group of such sweepers resting and chatting, with their malodorous baskets at their feet, before picking them up again and carrying them away on their heads.

* Vimala has won through and taken her place in the open as a worker. In August, 1930, news reached me that she had helped to organize the Passive Resistance Movement in her province and had taken part in the violation of the salt laws. She is now in jail under a six months' sentence.

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Europeans generally employ private sweepers to wash and sweep their rooms as well as to do their scavenger work, but Hindus will never permit sweepers even to cross the threshold of a living-room, and no sweeper may ever enter a kitchen, or touch the food or water of higher castes. Their very shadow pollutes the orthodox high-caste enough to make him hurry to go and take a purifying bath. Living much with Hindus, I soon understood this attitude. I, also, would not willingly tolerate the ordinary sweeper too near.

But, of course, the whole system was iniquitous. It could so easily be changed. Higher wages and a few sanitary appliances would make the work less onerous and permit greater cleanliness.

One sweeper, a widow, took care of the two outside toilets meant for my servants, and I engaged her little son, Gobinda, to take care of the "commodes" of my own bathrooms. He was twelve, willing and honest. As he worked only for me, I could enforce his own bodily cleanliness, and so I daily let him wash up with a disinfectant all my polished cement floors. He had no other work, and consequently idled a great deal.

Gobinda picked up English at an amazing rate and was in all other ways so delightfully intelligent that I was inclined to favor him. It turned me sick to think that such a child should by birth be compelled to look forward to a life of nothing but cleaning vilest refuse. In the light of this I rebelled against Hindu society with its millions of untouchables for whom life holds nothing but disgrace and filth and poverty in unending succession.

I tried in my blundering way to make up for the crime of society to this bright child. Always eating my breakfast at 7 A.M. on my veranda, and knowing Gobinda came breakfastless, I one day called him while I was eating. With much hesitation he came up the veranda steps and stood stockstill on the topmost one. It took much persuasion to make him come to within two steps of me. I held out to him a plate with a slice of French toast. His eyes shone, not so much with greediness as with appreciation; but he was also terribly

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embarrassed, and did not reach for it.

My husband, who disapproved of all this, told me: "He will never dare touch your plate, not with the butler present."

So I took the slice directly in my fingers and then, still reluctantly, he reached for it. But eat it, he would not; he simply kept on squirming in agonized self-consciousness.

"*Jao!*" my husband suddenly barked out, in the tone that high-castes usually use towards sweepers.

That "Go" Gobinda understood. It was pathetic to see the relief in his face as he bounded away.

I felt that my method of trying to cut through such involved social injustice as this child was fated to encounter, was far too lessen crudely direct to be effective. I also faintly suspected that all the good it might do to Gobinda would be to bring the persecution of the other servants down upon his head; yet, somehow, I hoped that there would be something in the way in which I handed him his bread, something in the fact that his Burra Memsahib was willing to have him near her table, added to his delight in receiving some new and untasted bit of food, that would help to his feeling of constricted isolation. So I kept up this little rite of feeding the child from my own table—though my turbaned butler continued to stand by in a silent dignity that fairly oozed disapproval and disgust.

I decided to send Gobinda to school. There was an American mission nearby, but as I am not in favor of any religious proselyting, I sent him to a school of the Servants of India Society instead. Gobinda came with the first morning light, did an hour's work, then went to school and returned to his duties in the afternoon.

Sitting on my veranda one day, in his third week of school, I called him to me and gave him a piece of chalk. I pointed to the smooth dark floor at my feet.

"Write what you have learned!"

With delight at my interest, he set to laboriously and traced a clear

"Go on!"

A bit less sure, he wrote /, then

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"Write all of it, all the letters."

He remained a long time bent double, clutching his chalk. When I urged him, he merely shook his head, and did not look at me. Long probing and patience alone made me elicit the facts: Being an untouchable, he had been made to sit in the back of the schoolroom, at a distance from the other pupils, and this particular teacher paid no attention to him whatever. So three weeks of schooling had equipped him with only three letters!

It must be remembered that this was in one of the most orthodox provinces of India, where caste and purdah were still practically unbroken. But in spite of instances like this, I was amazed again and again to see signs of a great inner release from the fetters of old conventions. I felt this independence of mind especially among students, due to two influences. First and foremost, the closer I came to know them, the more I realized how profoundly alive, though buried under superficial latter-day social division, remains the ancient spiritual Hindu awareness of the innate oneness of all beings, be it sweeper, prostitute, saint or king. The second reason was their growing familiarity with Western writing; but still more their contact through newspapers and periodicals with the newly-awakened nationalistic and social-reform spirit that is sweeping India.

Each time that anyone among my young friends braved some outworn convention I felt a rush of appreciation and gratefulness, for only those who know the dread power of caste can realize the hope and promise for the ultimate regeneration and freedom of India which lies in such small actions.

For instance, one early afternoon, I had sent little Gobinda to carry a note to Ravenshaw College, more than three miles away. Huge trees that cast fearful shadows lined the road most of the way, and only now and then was there a friendly cluster of huts. Of course, I expected Gobinda back long before twilight, but he failed to return. Knowing him to be a bit timid and, after all, merely a child, I grew really concerned when black night settled and still no Gobinda. But as any number of things might have happened that I

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could not surmise, there was nothing to do but wait.

Suddenly, there was the tinkling of a bicycle bell and a light glided smoothly along the curved driveway up to my veranda steps. Off jumped a young Brahmin student from the college, and off jumped Gobinda, who had been standing on the hindwheel, his face glowing with pleasure and excitement over this incredible trip. I looked up in amazement and ran forward. "What on earth has happened?"

"Nothing special," the student called out cheerily. "The little chap was dreading the dark, so I gave him a ride. That is all." "But why didn't he start back home early enough?" "I am afraid we failed to pay attention to him. So he hung around a long time before daring to call himself to our notice and deliver his message. By then it had grown dark and suddenly he burst into tears. Just afraid of the dark, so I brought him along!"

What unheard-of consideration on the part of a Brahmin towards an outcaste!

The young student dropped his bicycle on the lawn and came up the steps. He tried to appear nonchalant, but I could see agitation and a strange glowing inner pride on his face. He had done what no Brahmin of this town had ever dared or cared to do. And he had done it in front of the other students!

I stretched out my hands and took his, pressing them warmly.

"This is splendid; I thank you for it. You have given me great joy tonight!"

"It was nothing," he laughed in shy embarrassment.

Just what this young Brahmin student's simple act implied may best be judged by what happened the following morning. When I came out on the veranda by 7 o'clock there stood Gobinda's mother below the steps. Her eyes were raised anxiously to mine. The moment she saw me she touched her hands to her forehead, bowing low and breaking into a burst of eager words. I motioned to her to be silent, as I could not understand her, and went back to call my husband. "Something seems wrong," I said.

"Oh, let her wait," answered my husband, who had recognized

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the voice, and he leisurely finished his dressing.

When he stepped out, the sweeper prostrated herself full length at his feet, beating her head against the stones.

"Sahib, Sahib, protect us," she moaned. "My boy did not realize what he was doing. The Brahmin has polluted himself on my boy's account, but it is we who will be punished. We shall starve."

"Get up," my husband said with rough kindness. "It is all right; nothing will happen. It is I who tells you so!"

She rose, relieved and hopeful, but not all the anxiety was gone from her face.

She and her kind have too often suffered at the hands of the high-caste for her to be able to believe in the marvel of such a change. But as she had already sacrificed more than an hour of that day's work, which might have meant docked wages and added pangs of hunger, she hurried off.

While problems such as Gobinda's had power to disturb me deeply, the suffering of animals moved me still more.

For a while I was the guest of a Brahmin in government service. My host's salary was twelve hundred rupees a month; the largeness of this will be clear when it is remembered that the average country school teacher's salary is fifteen or twenty a month. My host had, in addition, one free servant, and splendid free quarters: nine enormous rooms, four bathrooms, storerooms and closets as large as many a New York bedroom. Yet his family consisted only of himself, wife, and daughter. The compound was very large, but absolutely bare except for some lovely trees; not one plant nor flower pot even on the seventy feet long veranda. Beyond the huge fenced-in compound there lay the *maidan* where cows were free to graze. But rains were long past, the grass was sere, and the lowest branches of the trees had been nibbled bare.

In the yard a servant kept two cows, mere skeletons. I saw them watching ravenously for the moment when the bit of paring from the day's vegetables would be thrown to them. The servant mixed,

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once a day, in a bucket, a few handfuls of rice husks with water, and shared it between the two. One was expected to calf soon, and to give milk, the other—as no income could be expected of her—needed barely be kept alive. She got merely a few mouthfuls from the bucket and then was kicked away when she made a desperate and feeble attempt to grasp a bit more. For she was actually staggering from weakness, too feeble to attempt to graze. There was a huge running boil on her hindleg. Sharp and jaggedly projecting, her bones caught flares of dull light on the dead-looking skin, while the rest of her body was a series of deep black hollows. Even the short ribs stood out in clear silhouette, with a big cavity just below. The skin over the leg and hip-bones was bleeding or scraped away. I could hardly bare the sight of her.

Of course I knew perfectly well that millions of humans were starving in India daily and that therefore it was not to be wondered that animals do, too. Yet somehow it seemed there could be more immediate help for animals. I rebelled anew over the religious superstition which forbids the killing by Hindus of any cow, no matter how useless and how suffering.

And in this case there seemed no excuse whatever. Why such dumb misery in the very yard of one of the highest paid men of this town? I repeatedly spoke to the servant who owned the cow, and knew what he told me was true. He could not afford to buy feed. He had been cheated out of his very meager savings, and had had to take over these two skeletons as the only payment he could ever hope to get from that bad debt. Some day he hoped to sell them, if they would just hold out until the next rains, without dying on his hands. No one would buy them now in the bad season.

I took up the matter with my host, and, meeting with indifference, spoke heatedly and sharply as hardly befits a guest, pleading for his interference. But my host merely turned silent and changed the subject. Later, hoping to both touch and shame them, I tried to persuade wife and daughter. I failed in all endeavor.

"It is not our cow; we cannot interfere. It is the man's own

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responsibility and his karma. The only thing I could do," the wife told me, "is myself to buy feed for the cows. I do not feel called upon to enter upon such a course; it would establish a bad precedent. All the servants would take advantage, and would want to bring animals here."

How it all hurt, and how incomprehensible it seemed: my hosts' enthusiasm for all fine things in art and literature (I could bring tears to their eyes by reading some tragic Western play by a master writer), their unstinted hospitality and warmth toward me, yet here their indifference to the suffering of dumb animals— and to the starving people we passed when driving through the bazaars. I tried to remember that my host had given a donation of five thousand rupees for reform work, so somehow he must care. But this large giving seemed all at once unreal, insignificant. What good their intellectual perception and helpfulness in the abstract, if pity remained asleep in cases of misery under their very eyes?

As I write this, there flash through my memory other incidents of dumb incredible misery that I was later to witness and which could easily have been remedied.

Once I drove through some of the narrowest lanes in Srinagar, Kashmir. I was on pins and needles every minute for fear of running over someone or something. In one place, as we rounded a corner, my tonga actually did overturn a tiny donkey, but only the animal's feelings were hurt. Dogs, chickens, babies, donkeys, *sadhus*, calves, crowded the roadway, idly basking in the sun and hardly moving until the horses' hoofs almost touched them,

Kashmir laws say that if you kill a calf or cow you go to prison for fourteen years.

But they say nothing about dogs. One, a big black beast, especially seemed so slow that I cried out sharply to my driver who seemed inclined to drive over it. He swerved so suddenly and the lane was so narrow that the horse overturned some baskets of fruit outside a shop. In the commotion, the dog dragged itself on its front legs to the side of the road—his hindquarters trailing behind absolutely crippled.

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Shaken, I descended from the tonga and walked up; I saw his back was broken. I turned to the shopkeeper-yes, the dog had been lying here since the day before. In all that crowded bazaar not a soul had turned around, nor had there been anyone with mercy enough to end the sufferings of that poor beast. Even at my entreaty, and my offer of money, they refused to kill him; life was sacred!

Then there was that incident when I was sleeping on the ground floor of a house, with my windows raised but a few feet above an alley in the very heart of the Hindu section of Calcutta. Outside, the monsoon torrents were rushing down. But through them there pierced to my ears, always sensitive for such sounds,—agonizingly so because of the terrible awareness that animal suffering had roused in me in India—a despairing, weak little mewing. I couldn't bear it. I went out into the rushing rain, and brought in a soggy, shivering kitten just a few weeks old.

In the morning there was protest on the part of my Brahmin hosts. They never kept pets in the house; animals were unclean.

When I refused to "just simply throw it outside," they agreed with a shrug of the shoulders—for well they knew the uselessness of it—to send a servant to find out "to whom it belonged." Word came back—yes, it was the only surviving one of a litter from a neighbor's house. Not wishing either to keep them or to take upon themselves the unpleasantness and sin of killing, the neighbor had thrown the kittens into the street and did emphatically refuse to take this last one back.

"I will keep it in my own room," I pleaded, "until we know if it will live at all. It may die." Reluctantly, my host consented. Consent is too strong a word; he kept silent. I begged for a drop of milk; there was none in the house, only a bit of cold rice, and this the tiny thing gulped with starving eyes, only to vomit it again from sheer weakness. During the day it recovered a bit.

A couple of days later I had inadvertently left my door open, and the kitten had wobbled out into the hall. One of the men of the house, hurriedly leaving the front door, squashed it between door

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and sill. With his foot he merely shoved it back into the hall and left without a second glance. There I found it. The little thing lay in writhing convulsions of pain. Indignantly, I picked it up, and placed it on my rug. Then I went out to my Brahmin friend and begged him to have it killed at once.

Oh, no, there was not one person in the whole house who would do such a thing, not even the sweeper. Impossible. "Then please do it yourself. You see how it suffers." "I could not bring myself to do such a thing!" "But something must be done," I persisted, and a flash of annoyance passed over his face.

"It may get well, or else it will die of itself," he answered, with a tone that dismissed the incident. But I would not let it be dismissed.

"It will never get well; it is too badly hurt. And we have no right to let it suffer so!"

"No right? How do you know? What right has you to interfere?" He spoke with heat, and we were in the midst of a discussion. But with unusual vehemence he bore me down. He spoke of the Hindu aversion toward taking life, with scorn of our meddling Western superficiality. It was not by any means the first time I had heard this attitude aired, and had, in moments of abstract discussion, even a real sympathy for its fundamental truth. But never had I heard it set forth with such impassioned brilliance. He ended with a magnificent "You Westerners see only the surface of things. You with your materialistic outlook will never be able to appreciate our feeling and respect for the sacred-ness of life. You, who are always so ready to take it!"

He had spoken in a torrent of words that had silenced me. We looked at each other with unsuspected antagonism and dislike. I was almost, but not quite, impressed. For meanwhile the little creature still lay at our feet writhing. A sudden hot anger washed through me and made me forget that he was my host.

"Don't talk rot!" I flared out. "You who love chicken curry! Great liberal Brahmin that you are, you cannot get it in your own house, but when you come to mine, chickens are killed for you, and you know

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it and lick your chops. I've never heard you speak of the sacredness of the life of those chickens! Why, for God's sake, don't you face facts and stop humbugging? Why, for God's sake, don't you confess plainly that you, just as I am, are too much of a coward to kill, even in mercy; that we let others do the killing for us?"

He glared at me, ashen in anger, but I rushed on, in the great satisfaction of expressing for once without restraint my accumulated resentment, stored up for years, over the treatment of animals, over the indifference to their starvation and suffering. "Oh, you Hindus — you won't put your old sick cow out of her misery, but let her starve to death, or else you sell her to the Mohammedan butcher, loading the sin of killing on his head, but putting her blood-money into your own pocket!"

This was the last time I was asked to be the guest of this Brahmin friend of my husband's!

Yet, looking back, I know I have not been fair. First of all, morally this Brahmin was no coward; he had broken with all caste restrictions, taken his women-folk out of purdah, satirized his own caste in writings, all to his great cost. And as for this incident which estranged us, while I myself still continue to eat flesh from animals which I refuse to kill with my own hands, I have no right to criticize any friend, Hindu or otherwise, for also refusing to kill, though it be to bring relief from suffering.

And while I am still capable of rushing up to a bullock driver, as once I did, and snatching the stick out of his hands in a red desire to beat him with it unmercifully as he had been beating the bullock, to twist his arm as he had been twisting the bullock's disjointed tail— so long as I am capable of meeting fury with fury, I have no right to criticize. What is the value of my pain and indignation, compared to the quiet strength of Gandhi in that deliberate action of his which aroused such a storm from one end of India to the other—that one action of his that is more far-reaching and powerful than all the accumulated protests of Westerners?

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Gandhi is deeply religious, reared to and surrounded by the belief that cattle-killing is mortal sin. Yet he ordered a suffering little calf to be killed in his own *ashram*. He did this knowing what a volley of bitter criticism would be directed against him by orthodox Hinduism, knowing how deeply he—who never wishes to inflict pain on any living being—would wound millions in their deepest religious susceptibilities. He broke deliberately with the most powerful and fundamental tradition of Hinduism in a deed to assert that active mercy is superior to blind supine faith.

His act, more than any other thing, has made me feel that reform had better be left to Indians themselves. In their own good time they will bring about the necessary changes. We Westerners are welcome to help, yes, but when we are shocked by the cruelty to animals there, we had better remember how cruel the West still is even to human beings, how we still burn Negroes at the stake today!

And I had better remember the day when, on my lonely way to Calcutta, I stopped over and made a jolty pilgrimage through gleaming yellow dust to Brindaban, Krishna's birthplace. For a mile or more I drove through rolling land and forest reserved for the joyous roaming of cattle and wild things. In memory of the happy Cowherd-god all this land has been turned over to the god's mute friends as a perpetual free grazing preserve. No living thing may be killed or harmed here. Surely a sweeter tribute to the sacredness of the birthplace of a great god than the blood our crusaders rushed to shed around the grave of the Christian savior!

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CHAPTER SIX

While my contact with and understanding of Indian life was widening constantly, the scope and opportunities of my husband's and my own personal life seemed, on the contrary, to be narrowing. Ease and economic security constantly evaded us.

The first attractive position that Sarang had been offered after his return to India from the United States had been the managership of two sugar mills located sixteen miles apart in Burma. They were owned by the great industrialist, Jamal, of Calcutta. Living conditions and salary offered were very tempting, but Sarang hated the thought of leaving India again so soon. Instead, he had accepted a position with the newly-created Tata Sugar Corporation of India, from which he shortly afterwards resigned because of resentment of arrogant treatment from an Englishman.

This position had seemed the best possible opening in India. The Tata firm was the largest industrial enterprise in the country. However, the after-war impetus due to war profits that had led to these new sugar enterprises was already dying down. Jamal's factories in Burma failed within that year. The Tata Sugar Corporation was dissolved without ever having brought to birth a single factory * or plantation. Prospects for sugar all over India were most gloomy.

Sarang, who had made and printed a survey of the whole question, had come to the conviction that no sugar enterprise in India could possibly be successful that did not combine ownership of both land and factory. So from Bombay he had come straight to Cuttack, capital of his native province, Orissa, while I had gone to Lady Bose. Sarang believed his connections and influence to be sufficient to float a joint stock company in Orissa, with the purpose of acquiring land, developing it, and ultimately establishing a factory. Orissa was industrially

* The term "sugar mills" in India generally means the thousands of small mills for crushing cane driven by hand or bullock power. In contradistinction, refineries, large mills driven by steam are always referred to as "sugar factories." By far the greatest amount of sugar produced and consumed is brown unrefined sugar from the small mills; factories are a late development and still rare.

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still non-existent. It boasted one enterprise, a tannery, started by "the grand old man of Orissa," M. S. Das. This Das was now a man over seventy, with a succession of heroic failures back of him.

But where the old Das had broken ground and failed, the young Das might succeed. As a fact, Sarang's idea had been hailed with enthusiasm by the younger group of men prominent in Cuttack. Even some of the old-timers grew interested enough to promise substantial monetary support. Enough money was advanced to permit Sarang to interview zamindars and rulers of small states, and to tour the country with a view to investigate and select the most available tract of land for the enterprise. He spent eight solid months in work that ended in the final abandonment of the plan.

A number of reasons were responsible for this. The younger, more wide-awake group of Oriahs, who favored the scheme enthusiastically and were eager to see their province step into the ranks of progress, were not powerful enough. In Hindu society, power and money are too solidly vested in the hands of the aged. Thirty- to fifty-year-old sons of wealthy zamindars found themselves unable to lift a finger because a seventy- or eighty-year-old father had no use for innovations. Fear of the untried, lack of industrial vision, indifference, and treachery were powerful factors. For double-dealing there was on the part of some of Sarang's countrymen.

But two other great factors helped to bring about our defeat. For months Sarang was puzzled over one phenomenon. He would go to some important zamindar or raja, be his guest, investigate land and obtain an interested hearing and the promise of support. Then, sometimes even before the end of the visit, there would be an inexplicable change in the attitude of his host. Over and over again, he would feel a cooling of interest and an absolute withdrawal of the promise of help.

Little by little it dawned on him that within a day or two of his arrival at a given place, a stranger would also appear there and question the people of the village and his host.

"What is Mr. Das doing here? Whom did he see? What did he

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say? How long did he talk to them?"

This crude, clumsy persecution on the part of the provincial secret service authorities was enough to frighten away the moneyed class, rajas and zamindars to whose interest it is to stand in well with the authorities.

Sarang was sick about it all, and at last went directly to the authorities, asking that either cause be shown in open arraignment for such persecution, or else that it be dropped. The English official to whom he spoke was very understanding and very fine about it, and promised that this surveillance should cease. Individual English officials are generally fair and even sympathetic, but they themselves are hopelessly in the clutch of the system, and the system is iniquitous. Although this Englishman had given his orders to cease surveillance, the system had done its work, and it was too late. The confidence destroyed could not be regained.

The surveillance of America-returned students is an every-day occurrence in India. The very fact of having studied in America makes them liable in the eyes of the authorities to the suspicion of harboring notions of independence. But that Sarang, whose interest in industries and agriculture was so well known, should be subjected to this degree, was surprising.

About this time I had rejoined my husband at Cuttack. Soon after, I found out from a friendly official the hidden reason. He confided to me that in the offices of the local authorities there reposed a complete document covering the 1918 Hindu Trial in San Francisco, and also photostatic copies of confiscated letters, harmless enough, between me and my Hindu friends in Californian days. The mere fact that I had known those men in college days was sufficient for these wise heads to keep suspicion alive. The realization turned me sick that it was therefore really I who, because of long dead associations, was most hurtful to Sarang's present enterprise. Had the government under which Sarang tried to establish this first great industrial undertaking in his province been Indian instead of foreign, he would no doubt have had its powerful, enthusiastic support instead of this dogged, secret

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opposition.

There was still another factor I began to realize slowly during the months when I myself was living with him in Cuttack: Because he had a foreign wife he did not get the whole-hearted support he would have received had it not been for this strange element which his orthodox countrymen were wary of.

Thus ended in a total failure Sarang's first attempt at industrialization in his native province and we had to break up our home for the second time.

Discouraged and head over heels in debt, he left for Luck-now to stay with an old friend of his from Japanese days and try for new connections, while I, as summer had come around once more, returned to Calcutta and later to Lady Bose in Darjeeling.

Weeks piled into months, yet Sarang was not able, in the general industrial slump, to find suitable work. He stayed on with his friends in Lucknow and at last wrote to me to join him there. But I did not wish to put such a double burden on people who were strangers to me. I was on the look-out for some suitable work for myself. A telegram came from Bombay, asking me if I would take a position in the National College, at one hundred and fifty a month. This was low pay, but national institutions had limited funds. It would at least pay my expenses.

So instead of going to Lucknow I left for Bombay. I was becoming desperately discouraged. Almost eight months had passed since the dropping of the sugar scheme in Cuttack, yet Sarang was still without work. Out of two years' stay in India Sarang had had an income for less than five months. I distrusted the influence of his friend, whose attitude towards life I felt to be too indolent. I felt that our whole hope of a home in India was becoming illusive, unless matters took an absolutely new turn.

The position in Bombay seemed to offer an opportunity for me to hold on a bit longer; but when I reached that town, I found, to my bitter disappointment, that the matter had been merely a half-understanding between our friend, who had wired me to come at

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once, and one of the professors of the college. I was told: "Now that you are here you need not worry about money matters any more; this is your home, stay as long as you like, and if you want something to do, the college will be very glad of the great benefit of your knowledge of French and German and will appreciate your service greatly. But we find we cannot pay. It is service to India."

"Service to India" that would not even let me live! I wanted to earn my expenses; I was tired of being under obligations to others!

I tried to obtain other work but without success. In this town where Sarang had held such a high position, people considered it a mere whim on my part. And, in fact, there were few positions of any kind available.

I saw no way out, and thought seriously of leaving India. Out of this deep discouragement I wrote to Lucknow where Sarang had been staying alone for almost eight months: ". . . during the last week the desire to throw everything overboard and somehow get out of this country has grown intense. I have actually thought of leaving without saying a word to anyone, but somehow the old sense of comradeship is too strong to allow such a course. I must talk it over with you. I want to go! I can't bear to look forward to another two or three years like the last. It might make me hate India. I find that the very fact that I am married keeps me from obtaining positions here. People, having been kept in ignorance as to our economic position so as not to hurt your standing, do not take my efforts seriously.

"I can assure you, Sarang, that even if we continue to think of a future home together, it will be better for me to wait for it outside India. You can clear your debts much more easily if you have no foreign wife and Europeanized household hanging around your neck. You alone can live Indian style on half and even one-fourth of what we two together are forced to spend. I, somehow, will meet my own expenses outside. I am not happy spending money while debts remain unpaid; yet I cannot live cheaply in India, nor

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can I live with Indian friends who will not let me pay my share. . . ."

This letter brought Sarang straight down to Bombay! And as luck would have it, he applied and was accepted for a post almost immediately afterwards. We started for Cochin, in South India, in September, 1922, to take up the new position there and once more begin housekeeping.

For the following year and a half all our efforts were bent on repaying our debts. We denied ourselves everything we could possibly do without.

It was here in southern-most India that I first came into contact with Rabindranath Tagore. He was on an all-India lecture tour with the aim of collecting money for his World University at Santiniketan. He stopped as the guest of one of the officers of our company, and I accompanied him and the Reverend C. F. Andrews on our motor-boat across the lagoon to Cochin, where he talked to a large gathering of wealthy merchants. Apparently he expected enthusiastic support, which was not forthcoming.

At the end of the lecture he was handed a purse with only a little over one thousand rupees. The merchants regretfully told him (this was in 1922 or 1923) that their support of Gandhi's cause had been too severe a drain on their purses to leave much for Tagore's purposes.

All the way back from Cochin to Tatapuram, through the marvelous expanse of these lagoons, Tagore had no eye for their beauty. He was silent except for a few abrupt remarks. "No one can be a good nationalist who has no perception or sympathy for international aims," was the burden of his grievance.

It gave me an actual shock to see him momentarily so perturbed over financial failure. Many of his countrymen criticize Tagore for inopportune internationalism while India is in every need of whole-hearted nationalism to fight her way to a dignified place among nations. Such criticism gained new weight and new light for me during this boat trip with the poet.

Tagore was with us but for a day. Then we dropped back into dead

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monotony, which was broken only by some physical shocks, such as my realizing one day that the *ayah* who had been mending my stockings, which I then wore without renewed washing, was a leper; or seeing at every turn through our factory or the bazaars the frightful deformations that elephantiasis brings about. One out of eight of the inhabitants of Ernakulam was suffering from this dread and incurable disease.

We had no intellectual contact. Sarang was busy in his factory all day long, but I was without companionship. Cochin has a fearfully trying, damp climate, with a monotonously steady, high temperature all the year round. Climate and isolation both began to affect my health. So the second summer Sarang, with his unfailing care and generosity, insisted that I leave for a vacation in the hills. The cheapness and beauty of Kashmir combined to draw me there.

Lines of communication in India are still very insufficient. In order to reach Kashmir from the southwestern coast, I had to cross clear over to Madras on the eastern coast, then diagonally across the peninsula to Bombay, from there to Delhi and then in a straight line north. No other trip in so short a period of time could have revealed to me the amazing variety of types and costumes and manner of living.

Down in Cochin a dingy earth-colored loin cloth was worn by both men and women, and among the lower castes and untouchables the upper body of both men and women was bare. Also, the types were predominately Dravidian. As I crossed over to the Madras side, rich-colored *saris* sprang to my notice, deep blues, purples, oranges, reds. Then the farther north I got the more dressed and secluded the women, the richer and the more varied the coloring of their costumes, the fairer and more classically Aryan the type of features. The region around Delhi, where women gayly tripped about in flaring skirts sixteen to twenty yards wide, with brilliant shawls thrown over beautifully ornamented heads, was a perfect revelation of artistic joy.

On this trip, more than ever before, came the realization of the

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immense wealth of India's ancient art and culture. In glaring contrast to this, my own personal experience in Delhi revealed to me anew the sad indifference and neglect of beauty of the present day. I reached Delhi at dead of night, as a guest of our engineer friend, now a member of the Legislative Assembly. He was the first to introduce a bill for the enfranchisement of women— but his own wife in Cuttack was still in purdah!

Dear old Utchaba, our friend's servant, was at the station to greet me.

"Saheb is at a meeting!"

Utchaba took me in a tonga to a house that stood somewhat apart from others, but more I could not make out in the dark. He led me into a small apartment where I could see our friend's familiar objects all about, stacks of official Legislative Assembly stationery, typed proceedings, and accounts. Utchaba meanwhile disappeared with my bedding roll and bags. After a few minutes he called me and, flickering lamp in hand, led me up a very broad curving outer staircase to the second story. We crossed a huge veranda, then an absolutely bare room, and entered another vast room apparently prepared hastily for my temporary stay. A cot and mattress in one corner, a *durrie* on the marble floor, one or two tiny tables, a couple of chairs, nothing more. One door led out into a back hallway, full of other mysterious doors, one of which led into my bathroom:—bare tiled walls and cemented floor, with a part of the floor partitioned off by a cement coping three-fourths of a foot high, enclosing the "bathing" portion with its drainhole. For my benefit a bucket of water had been brought from somewhere, also a commode, but absolutely nothing; else, not even a nail to hang up a garment.

Coming back to my room, I examined the doors. Not one was provided with a lock, except my outer bathroom door, which led to the sweeper's staircase. I crossed the bare room between mine and the broad veranda—it too, could not be locked from the inside. I walked a little distance along the dark veranda; it seemed abnormally

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large, with many other unlocked doors leading into other empty rooms. I grew uneasy, wondering what kind of place I had come to. Utchaba informed me that the house was empty, except for the few rooms downstairs. But this particular evening, even those were deserted. I began to feel a bit forlorn, and almost wished I had been not quite so eager to see India *sans les Anglais*, when my husband's friend had written: "Send your wife along, we will take all care of her here in Delhi and for her stay in Kashmir." I suddenly wished myself in a "European" hotel.

Utchaba busied himself expertly opening my bags and my bedding roll. At my rash order he placed my small traveling mattress on top of the one on the bed, then spread my bedding. At last I instructed him to sleep in the empty room beyond mine, a bulwark between me and the Unknown Things I felt hovering on the veranda. Making a poor attempt at barricading my doors, I dropped off into a heavy sleep, exhausted from the hot day's and previous night's traveling.

But soon after dropping off, I awoke again, my arms, hands, neck and face burning. I had lost my mosquito curtain, and not yet found a chance of replacing it. So, Indian fashion, I carefully wrapped my sheet around me completely, leaving only a small airhole for breathing. But even before I could drop off again, the stinging and burning reappeared, and suddenly I was roused with a start out of my weary heaviness. The peculiar quality of the burn was unmistakable; it was not mosquitoes—it was bed bugs!

I jumped up and lit the lamp; but even during this delay their scurry had not led all under cover—there were so many! I killed several, revolting at the fetid odor. Then I kept the light burning, threw off all the covers, spread out my woolen blanket all over the bed, replaced sheet and pillow on this, then dropped off to sleep again. I had been told with assurance that no respectable bug would ever crawl over a woolen blanket. But either these bugs had an alarming start over me, or else they were decidedly not respectable. I woke up once more, in agony. They were everywhere, inside my pillow, over the blanket, on the curtain-poles. I slaughtered dozens without mercy, but still the brown

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hordes came on. In desperation I called Utchaba. No answer. Taking courage in my hands, plus a lamp, I opened my door into that terrific, dark, empty room off the veranda. No Utchaba was lying outside my door!

I almost forgot the bugs—to be utterly alone in that vast empty second story seemed a bit too much. Then, far off, I glimpsed something dark on the white floor. In front of another door lay stretched a motionless bundle of blankets, not even the tip of a nose visible. Utchaba had chosen, not the door I had pointed out to him, but another door actually nearer to my bed inside, so as to be sure to hear me should I call!

Well, call I did, again, standing right next to him, but no answer. "Utchaba!" I fairly shouted again, but not a sigh. In sudden alarm I kicked the bundle sharply with my slippers, and it stirred! Out of swathings of blanket and *dhoti* emerged a sleep-drunk, staggering Utchaba, his long heavy hair dangling into his blinking eyes and over his faithful monkey-face.

It took some time for the idea to percolate into his mind that I wanted; him to come and help me fight the encroaching enemy. He came willingly enough, but was decidedly not interested. Memsahibs were so fussy; these brown beasties surely were not so much bother!

I had Utchaba tear off my sheets and traveling mattress from that fateful bed with its infested mattress. Spreading my bedding on the marble floor, we hunted over every square inch most minutely. We coaxed them to come out of their cozy corners and then pounced on them; turned seams inside out, called to the cowards to come out and fight, and carried on in the thick of battle for a full half hour. Then I had Utchaba carefully pile my host's cot, mattress, durrie, tables, chairs on the farthest side of the room, a very bug-mountain-fastness; placed my carefully scrutinized baggage clear across on the other side, leaving a thirty-foot white space of no man's marble floor between. Making sure that no tiny brown spots adorned that white expanse, my inch-thick mattress only between me and the downy marble floor, I once more lay me down to sleep, and begged

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the Lord my bugs to keep across the neutral zone. This time, even the exquisite softness of the floor could not keep me awake.

First thing next morning I surveyed the field of battle, and actually counted the toll. Forty-four dead lay there, their blood staining my fresh white sheets; how many more lay hidden dead or dying in ditches and trenches I could not tell. The odor of the carrion had brought a buzzard that perched on a high pole outside my window. I longed for a Barbusse to fitly sing this song of the Battle of Bug Run.

Utchaba brought me my tea, fruit, and toast. I picnicked on the floor, scorning those chairs and tables.

"Where did you get this furniture?" I asked him severely, suspecting they had been rented from some unmentionable bazaar shop. No, they had, with the kindliest intention in the world, been lent for my use out of the home of one of the wealthiest men in Delhi!

After this weird nocturnal welcome, I was dying with curiosity. So, even before finishing my *chota hazri*, I looked around. Huge, immensely high rooms, the walls beautifully panel-molded in real stone, all floors marble, a veranda so huge that a regiment could have bivouacked on it, a broad flight of stairs winding down in a grand sweep to the ground. Monkeys perched all over and jabbered wildly at my emergence from the room.

I went back to my unfinished *chota hazri*, only to find that a monkey-mother with her baby had entered during my short absence, and was pawing over my fruit. At my shout, she fled with angry voluble protest, overturning my tea, but clutching my banana as tightly in her tiny hand as her wee baby was clutching her in its curious under slung position that did not hamper her flight one whit.

My strange abode proved to be a palace one hundred and twenty-five years old, built by a great Mohammedan *begum*. The upper story walls are three feet thick, those of the ground floor five to seven feet; solid stone and a little brick was used in the building. It was very valuable property, within inner town limits. The present owner, host of my host, had bought it for a song, yet even so had to pay four lakhs for the house, and twelve lakhs for the grounds (one lakh is $33,000). He

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and his family lived in another house, stuffy and crowded, in the very center of the bazaar.

In this romantic old palace, built as no one builds now any more, the owner sees nothing but a good investment. The building is neglected beyond words; in the grounds there is not a tree nor shrub, and ten feet away from the door of the only inhabited part there runs a quite useless dilapidated bit of fence on which dirty old sacks are hanging.

The furnished portion below, the owner keeps as a sort of office, or to entertain guests, just as at present he has turned it over to our friend. This apartment alone could be a dream. It used to be the begum's bath and retreat. Raised a foot or two above the ground, it is protected from the outside heat by its immensely thick walls. It is entirely marble lined; floors, walls, ceilings. Once it contained a pool of water in the center of one room, with steps leading down, and a fountain playing. I could picture the by-gone loveliness of living: cool white marble everywhere washed daily with sweet water, sprinkled with perfume, flowers scattered, a few rugs and silver-tasseled pillows flung down for the begum to rest on. In front of her a low-carved table with shining silver plates of fruit and *sharbat;* a silver hookah with blue enamel by her side, and the faint fragrance of perfumed tobacco. Nothing else in the cool marble whiteness to break the sense of exquisite freshness and repose, a lovely glacial cave that made a laughing mockery of the torrid heat rising in waves from the yellow parched ground just outside the magic walls.

But now, in 1924, this exquisite apartment was filled with Western furniture—a few good, heavily carved but utterly neglected and dust-ingrained pieces, most of them cheap, tawdry stuff. In one room on the lovely marble floor two kerosene stoves were burning with a noisy flare, charcoal braziers were lighted and vegetables strewn all about—it was turned into a kitchen.

In the next room the pool was covered over, a telephone jangled in one corner, a phonograph lurked in another, and my host's host begged me repeatedly and urgently to sing the American and Swiss national anthems into his recording machine for his phonograph.

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He already had "so many, oh, so many records."

Truly, the sense of art and the love of beauty is dead in daily living, in present-day India. Indeed, nothing more would have been needed to complete the utter frightfulness into which modern days had turned this palace than for my voice to have been recorded and turned on day after day in these once glorious rooms. I was almost tempted, in cutting irony, to add this finishing touch. Would it not be fitting that a distinctly bad Western voice should drone these national anthems? Had not, after all, the loud disharmony of Western national anthems gone far toward bringing about this degeneracy in oriental lands? Were the West less racially and nationally conscious and ambitious and unscrupulous, India, for one, would have retained much of her old lovely handicraft, and her love of and her pride in the beauty of her own creations.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

From Delhi I went to Lahore as a guest of Lala Lajpat Rai, with whom I had formerly collaborated in various writings while still in California. With him and members of his family I visited Lahore's Moghul monuments.

Lalaji seemed frightfully overworked, depressed, and despondent: "Not a ghost of a chance of independence in less than twenty-five years." I did not reply, as I had grown very weary of political discussions in the Legislative Assembly. I was far more drawn to the life of the streets. But I did remember that ten years before, in an equally depressed mood, Lalaji had said to me: "No ghost of a chance in less than seventy-five years!"

I reached Kashmir as the earliest summer visitor, and went absolutely wild over breathing cold air again, over seeing green fields, glittering mountains and a friendly blue sky that you could look in the face and did not have to hide from. Here I had the chance of living for the first time with a Mohammedan family, that of Nawab Maula Bakhst, former Prime Minister of Kashmir. The begum was a Persian princess whom her husband had wooed and won while on some diplomatic mission to Persia in his youth. It had taken them three months to return by caravan to India across the deserts. Several members of their family had the clear gray eyes and blond hair of pure Persian descent. Their huge house was fitted out in Western style, yet held an abundance of Persian rugs, beautiful Indian draperies and handicraft.

The nawab was very enlightened, all the children well educated, and the daughters out of purdah. The begum sahiba, however, did not speak English and had remained in purdah all her life, though leaving her daughters free. Then, at the end, in response to the urging of her children, she, too, threw away the veil.

While I was living with them, I read the *Koran* from beginning to end, discussing it with the nawab. It seemed to me that with the *Koran* as with the Gospels, religion as it was practiced had mighty

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little to do with the original injunctions. The *Koran* itself showed an amazingly liberal and advanced social conception, and a guarding of women's rights far beyond anything known in those days.

I felt more at ease in that house than in any other I had lived in thus far in India, except Lady Bose's.

In Kashmir, I had a unique experience in painting. While sketching in the middle of the bazaar, my driver, knowing I was on the lookout for types, brought an ash-smeared *sadhu*, clad only with a gee-string, to my car. Mad to make a real study of him, I turned to my driver.

"Ask him. if he will *please* come for several days to my house *so* I can make a large painting of him."

"I cannot refuse any sincere request," the *sadhu* himself, to my amazement, answered in perfect English. I

My house was more than three miles away, and the *sadhu* a newcomer in Kashmir. How to find it, and how to come so far? Before I knew what he was up to, my driver, a very clever, eager fellow, much interested in my painting, had spoken swiftly to the *sadhu*, and thrown open the front door of the car, inviting him with the greatest deference to a seat. He knew how often false promises of visits had been made to me, and wanted to make sure this interesting type did not escape me. I caught my breath for a second, and then, with a grin, rode through the bazaar and the European section of the town—to the disgust of all the English passersby—with this stark-naked *sadhu*.

While posing for me, the *sadhu* fell at once into deep, genuine meditation in one of the ancient yogi postures. Folded hands, closed eyes, he remained motionless—literally so—for hours. Almost physically, I felt great waves of serene peace radiating from him, enveloping me, and giving me strength to paint tirelessly. Out of a mere painting episode, these days turned into a spiritual experience for me.

The *sadhu* had left Benares six months ago on foot, and was on the last lap of his pilgrimage to the Glacier Caves of Siva at Amarnath, in the Himalayas. Annually, thousands of pilgrims with bare feet and without protective garments, undertake this arduous journey,

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traveling at one point over a snow-pass more than fourteen thousand feet high. Hundreds, dying of exposure, pass right into the white arms of the great god. I never saw my *sadhu* again.

By now, I was anxious to return home, and wrote to my husband to that effect. He advised me to stay longer, but I replied by definitely announcing my return to Cochin. In turn a telegram reached me: "DON'T COME SOUTH; GO TO BENARES. LETTER ADDRESSED THERE WILL EXPLAIN." A former letter of my husband's had spoken of the whole of the Cochin railway having been washed away by devastating floods. The only way he himself could manage to return to Ernakulam after an absence was by getting hold of a tractor that ploughed along soggy roads through heavy waters. On a mountain road the tractor slid into the ditch and the desperate efforts of the driver failed to get it out. This was at nightfall in the midst of jungle, miles from the nearest village. Sarang and the driver stood in the downpour wondering desperately what could be done, when there came a nearby raja's lumbering elephant with two *mahouts* sitting astride a roped-down mattress. Elephant and mattress had seemed as heaven-sent to my husband as dove and olive branch "must have been to your Noah." From a huge tree they cut a vine tough as steel cable. One end they attached to the tractor in the ditch, the other was put around the elephant. Then the mahout gave a sign and the beast responded immediately. Not long after, both tractor and elephant were on their way again. I had also read that suffering was incredibly great; ten thousand homes had been flooded and swept away in our district, hundreds of people drowned, thousands of cattle wiped out. Still, somehow, all this did not account for Sarang's not wishing me to return to Cochin. He knew that such happenings would rather tend to draw me there than to keep me away. Wondering greatly, I left for Benares, eager to .get the letter awaiting me in the care of Sarang's oldest friend, Dinu, with whom I was to stay.

I had heard much of this friend and of the jolly times they used to have together in Japan. How jolly they could have been I sensed at once, when Dinu greeted me at the train with booming voice and

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a rolling laugh. In fact, everything about him rolled a bit, his eyes, his huge fat body, his gait. Outside the station his *sais* was waiting with carriage and impatient horse which reared a bit as we stepped into the phaeton. Dinu was living in the European section of the town in a low, wide-verandaed bungalow nestling among beautiful trees. Not a trace here of the crowded squalor of the Indian section of Benares.

At the foot of the veranda steps stood Sand, Dinu's wife, not one whit less genial nor less rotund than he. I was taken to my room in the back of the house.

"Be careful of snakes and keep a close lookout for white ants," Dinu warned me.

With the help of a servant I started unpacking under the punkah that swung from side to side of the room, heavily stirring the hot, stifling air. Even the lighter exertion that fell to my share was enough to throw me into profuse perspiration.

"Memsahib, ghosul tyar hai," a voice called from the bathroom and I hastened to take my bath. Shock-cold was the water freshly drawn from the well, with which I finished off, but the mere effort of drying myself once more covered me completely with perspiration before I could slip back into fresh garments. Yet this was late in the evening. No wonder I had been warned against Benares in monsoon time. This was terrible! What would it be like in daytime, I wondered. Responding to the call of a servant, I joined my hosts in the dining room. High-backed chairs, white tablecloth, butler in uniform with a red ribbon, which bore his master's initials in silver monogram, slashed across the high turban; whisky and soda, cutlery, all the trimmings of a European table. Hindu host but no Hindu household, this! Yet, the Hindu elements did creep in; it amused me to see in what forms. By the side of Santi's glass there was a small dish with at least a dozen red and green chilies. One after another of these disappeared as dinner progressed. I began to wonder if she were asbestos-lined. Then there was *luchi;* by this alone I would have known that my hosts hailed from Bengal, and at the

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end of the meal *haloa* was served, that deliciously deadly dish made of equal proportions of cream of wheat, butter, and sugar, and richly spiced with pistachios and raisins. The haloa put the finishing touch to a meal of one course of fish, two of meat, and many tastily prepared vegetables. Among the relishes there was an especially delightful dish of some sour-sweet plum-like fruit that the hostess herself had prepared.

Dinu expanded under whisky, soda and food like Bacchus himself; a Roman couch would have been more suited to him than this high-backed chair. I did not wonder any more at the generous proportions of the childless couple, nor that their daily waddling exercise, six times back and forth between veranda and front gate, did not do much to help matters.

That night as I was undressing, the fan slowed down and soon the creaking of the rope over the pulley that connected fan in room with boy on veranda, stopped entirely. I called and the swinging started anew. Then I slipped in between the hot sticky sheets. I don't know how much later I woke up to find myself bathed in sweltering heat; the fan had stopped again. I called out, but there was no answer. I resorted to the good old Indian trick of reaching for a shoe under my bed and threw it through the bars of the window onto the veranda. But even that thumping didn't awaken the sleeper outside.

After a night of restless tossing and drugged sleep, I awoke to a morning of rain so heavy that it surrounded the veranda like a silver wall.

Over a breakfast of bacon and eggs (English bacon, behold, in a Hindu household!) my host asked me: "Did you sleep at all?" "Not any too much," I replied.

The heat compelled me to add what I hoped might not be taken as criticism. "That punkah boy of yours certainly sleeps like the dead!"

"I am awfully sorry," Dinu answered. "I meant to tell you last night, but forgot all about it. We have dismissed our night punkah boy and are doing without fans because two mornings ago one

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man was found stretched out on the veranda next door with slippers lying about him. A cobra had stung him. If, however, you find you cannot sleep without the fan, I will certainly see that you have a boy tonight." "Indeed, no!" I cried out, appalled.

Whenever the rain did not veil everything with a heavy grayness, I spent a large part of my stay in Benares, painting. Dinu's sweeper woman, poverty-stricken outcaste that she was, had the most marvelously delicate hands I have ever seen in India, that land of beautiful hands. She carried herself with queenly grace and poise. Dinu and his wife were very amused and the other servants a bit disdainful when I insisted upon having her as my model. It was she whom I painted with the water pot on her head in front of the lovely old broken well in the backyard of Dinu's house, a painting that was later accepted by the Grand Salon National in Paris and sold in my San Francisco exhibition. On Dinu's veranda I painted a proud old rascal of a *sadhu* whom I kidnapped from the bathing ghats of Benares. He came in a tonga, scorning to use an *ekka* merely smiling indulgently at my protest at the triple expense. He also brought to the sittings his own personal attendant, who sat nearby fanning the charcoal fire for the hookah and kneading the little opiumated pellets of tobacco. Every ten minutes his lordship grew restless and kept on shifting his pose unless I signaled to the attendant to let him indulge in his smoke. The contrast between this self-seeking *sadhu* and the true ascetic whom I had just painted in Kashmir vividly illustrated to me the gulf that exists in India between the few thousands of genuine seekers after religious truth and the millions who turn into religious beggars merely to escape honest work. Yet India encourages such waste by putting the stamp of meritoriousness on indiscriminate almsgiving.

Glimpses of the sun were few, and the dampness unbearable. Shoes mildewed heavily overnight. One morning I noticed to my dismay fantastic clay-patterns serpentining down my wall behind the shelves on which I had stowed away my oil-sketches. Investigating closer, I noticed that an army of white ants was taking a keener interest in my

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painting than any other being had ever done before. They had linked the boards closely with their clay constructions, adding interesting futuristic touches. Moreover, the sketches were heavily mildewed. Since that morning the sun shone brilliantly through the clouds, I hastened to arrange them to dry against the outside wall of the house. This meant that each trip I came close to the low overhanging thatch. Suddenly I felt something drop onto the back of my neck; there was a flurry and sting after sting. With both hands I beat wildly, screaming. Dinu came running, drew me over to his veranda, into a room and there beat off the last of the huge yellow wasps that followed even that far. Immediately he applied ammonia to the stings. They were all over my neck and hands and among the roots of my hair. He counted twenty-two separate marks.

The pain was almost unbearable. Tiny blisters appeared, then red spots, especially in the palms of my hands. Soon these hardened, turned white and spread until the inside of my palms and other parts of my body felt like a board. The swelling increased and I felt a queer dizziness pervading me and then my tongue began to puff so that I could barely swallow. All at once a great darkness rushed towards me. With a tremendous effort I tried to speak. I saw the faces of my hosts and from their terror realized more even than from my terrible pain how real the danger was.

The servant had been sent off post-haste to the nearby army doctor and meanwhile Dinu forced between my teeth a triple dose of a snake poison remedy, the only thing he had in the house that he thought might help. Then darkness closed around me. I awoke again at the murmur of voices and realized the doctor was there.

"There is nothing else I can do," he said. "She will go into high fever now that will last for days. Have plenty of ice around."

But to his great astonishment the fever broke after eight hours and in a day or two I was as well as I had ever been.

In my host's warehouse compound the previous year, a man and a horse had been attacked by a swarm of wasps of that species. The

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man had fled into the shelter of a *godown* where his comrades had rid him of the pursuing wasps. But then he had lain for three days in unconsciousness in a hospital, and the horse, left out in the open at the mercy of the wasps, had died in agony.

My hostess spoke English well. I found her widely read in Western literature. But there was a curious hiatus in her. Her Hindu and Western thinking were tucked away in separate cubbyholes, and did not interfere with, nor seem to influence, each other. For instance, no question sprung in surprise, no trick I tried in sheer fun, could ever induce her to overcome the Hindu wife's inhibition against letting the name of her husband cross her lips. Then also, her living room was furnished entirely in European style. Tables and cabinets were full of photographs and knick-knacks in ivory, silver filigree and carved wood. But around three portraits there hung daily fresh wreaths of jasmine buds. One of the figures I recognized, that of the great Bengali reformer Vivekananda; the other two were members of her family. She made a daily rite of this, now that she no longer modeled a *Shiva-lingam* in clay or mud each morning, as she had done when first married. Before this symbol she used to scatter flowers, burn a ghee-filled lamp, offer the day's food supply for consecration, and say her prayers.

"I had no use for such rites and tried to break her of it," her husband told me, "but she kept up her worship until I told her one day how Western scholars have discovered that the meaning of the Shiva-lingam is sexual. This shocked her so that, in disgust, she immediately broke the clay figure she was modeling, and from that day on never again performed her worship."

Her husband shook with laughter.

"Why," I said in surprise, "isn't it commonly known that the Shiva-lingam is a phallic symbol?"

"No," Dinu said with conviction, "not one worshiper in a thousand is aware of it."

I felt a bit sorry. What need had there been for her modernized husband to give her worship a tinge of obscene meaning? It is a shallowly-reflected Western attitude. A deeper knowledge of his

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own philosophy and scriptures might have let him give his wife an interpretation of the symbol in the true light of its origin— respect and adoration of the eternal mystery of all creative forces.

I could better sympathize with another of his interferences with ancient custom. When first married, Santi had, each morning on awakening, taken the dust of her lord's lotus feet. He tried to break her of this too. Silently she seemed to acquiesce, but some time later he realized that she now made a habit of waking and rising while he was still asleep and performing the rite before he could become aware of it. All her Western reading could not rid her of the inner reluctance of doing without this ceremony, symbol of the only possible relationship between orthodox Hindu husband and wife. It was only when Dinu forbade her in sheer anger ever to do so again that she desisted.

Every morning, too, Santi spent a full hour over the preparation of *pan.* With the utmost care she rinsed the tender greenish-yellow leaves in fresh water, tore out the center rib, spread carefully the thinnest coating of lime over it and then scattered her finely balanced selection of more than half' a dozen spices over the leaf. Then the leaf was folded into a triangle and a clove stuck through held it fast in this shape. She never failed to offer this condiment to a guest, for to do so would be to offend against hospitality. She herself was practically never without a cud of this in her mouth, eating on the average between twenty-five to thirty a day. I often wondered how her health could endure it. I believe the stimulation of *pan* takes the place of drinking in the West, or of the endless and equally disgusting gum-chewing of some Americans.

Although Santi's selection of the latest and best of Western books was far above my own means of indulgence, yet somehow I found I could not discuss them with her. Either she did not know how or did not wish to express opinions. In fact, somehow on no point did I ever seem able to feel close to her. As for my host, his geniality was unfailing and he had a great facility for talk, but this talk circled mainly around the exciting youth of his student days in nationalistic Bengal and the gay times in Tokyo. I did not feel that he was actively interested in the life of India of the present period, and the few hours of work

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that occupied him during each day had no other concern except that of money making.

But as a host he was unfailingly generous and jovial. I felt mean because, somehow, nothing in me responded with any warmth to the life of this couple; they had nothing to give me beyond the material. In their Westernization they had acquired nothing of the finest that the West has to give and lost all of the East that was precious to me. I made some effort to change my own ungrateful attitude and lack of warmth, but then an accident happened which destroyed even this desire.

Dinu had owned several horses, but he knew nothing about them. His present English one he had bought by mail at a great bargain from an officer returning home. It was a beautiful beast but it did not take Dinu long to discover the reason for its amazingly low price. The horse had sudden fits of fright, shying at imperceptible things. All at once it would begin to tremble in every limb and roll its eyes in stark terror and back away. If held at this time, it would start rearing and kick out with its hind legs. Some great former shock must have been the unknown cause of this. Nothing but slow, steady gentleness and an arousing of new confidence could have brought it around to a normal state. But of this Dinu felt and understood nothing. During the few times that I had driven out with him, Dinu and the *sais* jerked the horse rudely about when it shied and, as the roads ahead of us happened to be clear, had let him take it out in a free run along the straight highway.

But one morning, just as it was brought to the veranda, the horse started trembling and rearing while the *sais* held him by the bridle.

"Get in quickly," Dinu called to me. But before I could do so the horse launched out and started hammering against the dashboard. Then an incredible flare of anger shot over the face of Dinu—Dinu otherwise always so jolly and indolent. He got hold of the bridle and took the thin end of the whip in his hands. In a blind fury he started striking the horse over eyes and ears and nose with the heavy-leaded grip till the blood flowed through the nostrils as well as

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from the hoofs that shattered the dashboard.

"Stop, Dinu!" I shouted several times, but he had no ears. I stood there trembling as violently as the horse. I refused pointblank ever to drive again and nothing was able to make me forget the incident.

At last a letter came from Sarang asking me to meet him in Bombay. It also stated that due to partial failure and closing of the mills in Cochin he had lost his position. He had known this when he wired to Kashmir "don't come south," but had not wanted to worry me. Of course, with our bitter experience back of us, the bad times prevailing in India, and knowing our debts were not yet cleared, being out of work again did strike fear to the heart. But still, I was very glad to slip away from Benares.

On the train I thought over my last experience. I realized that race had nothing to do with the strong sense of apartness between me and my Benares hosts. Had I met just their type of Americans in the West, I should have been equally averse to the man's lack of ambition, and his geniality based merely on indolence. In Kashmir I had seen a great deal of two Englishwomen and may have been a bit affected by their general, growing dissatisfaction and irritation against things Indian. I sometimes caught myself in the error of disliking as Indian what would have been uncongenial to me in any country, among any people.

In a further attempt to regain reasonableness, I reached into my traveling bag and took out a letter which my husband had enclosed in his own. It was just one cry of fear out of many in those days of almost complete closing down of the mills. The communication read in part:

"I beg to state that I am the only grown-up son to my parents, and I have to support myself, my father and my mother who is quite an invalid, and three sisters and one brother who are minors and all of whom are solely depending upon my poor salary of Rs. 7 1/2 a month [$2.50] for food, clothing, and all other necessities. From the above facts your honor can more or less imagine our pitiable and miserable situation. In fact, my two youngest sisters who are mere babies have experienced starvation so much as to move any obdurate

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minds at a sight of their tender and delicate skeletons . . . now I regret very much to inform your honor that I truly startle with terror at the reduction of hands by which we the poor and helpless creatures will have to suffer various indescribable miseries arising from scarcity."

I knew the letter gave a true description, and I also knew that my husband had, of course, not been able to avert any dismissals.

Reading this letter over gave me a further distaste for the indolent luxurious ease in which my Westernized Benares hosts lived. But it gave me also a wholesome distaste for my own little self. What business had I, who had voluntarily chosen India as my home, to expect security, to be exempt or aloof? I had not come to join either indigenous or foreign exploiter. It was the India of great thoughts and great suffering that had drawn me. Had I cause for all my discontent? Could I really consider my mental suffering in the face of such glaring physical misery that abounded all around among India's own children?

During my trip to Kashmir I had been spending each month on the average about thirty times the amount of the wages of that poor employee on whom the living of an entire family depended. The American head of Sarang's firm, an ordinary chemist before he left the States, was receiving exactly four hundred times as much per month as that Indian. Yet that Indian was not a coolie, but a low-paid clerk, with education enough to know English well.

The wife of the American manager had incensed some of the staff of the mills. They considered her treatment of them insulting. One such instance brought matters to a head when she insisted on calling an engineer simply "Rao" instead of "Mr. Rao." He was a new man, filled with the spirit of self-respect that is sweeping through India, and insisted on courteous treatment from the whites.

"The idea of objecting!" she exclaimed in scorn. "He has to remember that there is a difference!"

"You will never see clearly," I replied. "You have your Southern prejudices; you who dislike the colored people will never appreciate the Indian point of view."

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"You are very much mistaken," she said with warmth. "I don't dislike the Negro; I love him, but I love him as I love my dog and my horse!"

I had felt it useless to argue with one who placed any human being on the level; of animals.

Into her lap India had poured wealth and position such as she could not dream of in her own country. She had never had one moment's economic worry, and expected with her Indian savings to be able to buy a farm back in the States in a short space of time.

Thinking of the poor employee, whose letter was in my hand, no doubt actually going through a period of starvation at present, I suddenly remembered a delightful talk that I had had with a great Hindu mill owner of Bombay and Ahmedabad. I had been amazed to find such deep understanding and appreciation of Tolstoy's philosophy and ideas of education. In his garden this mill owner had built a house especially as a school for his children, with the most marvelously complete children's library.

A follower of Gandhi, *khaddar-spun* cloth was used everywhere, as dresses, as curtains, and even in umbrellas. This would indicate great simplicity, yet from a friend of his in Calcutta I knew that this mill-owner, when going off with his family for a short vacation to Darjeeling—thousands of miles away—had taken with him, in order to preserve caste and comfort, every item of household utensils necessary, even the bedsteads.

Seventy-five thousand rupees had been spent on this vacation trip, yet statistics proved beyond a doubt that mill-hands in Bombay were living under the most incredibly inhuman conditions of squalor. Whole families, sometimes two or three, were crowded into a single room. There was one instance where one fifteen-by-twelve-foot room had been found occupied by six separate families comprising thirty people in all.

I thought over these things as I sat in a train speeding toward Bombay. During the years past I had seen so much hopeless misery in India on one side, so much indifference and extravagance, both Indian and European, on the other. And between the two there fretted

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combustibly a whole army of youth, educated and ready for useful service, but finding no elbow room in the present scheme of things, no joyous scope for work, in fact, no work at all such as they were fitted for. Brilliant college graduates were glad to accept clerks' positions at a mere pittance, barely more than a cook received in a foreigner's household; Indian professors of unquestionable high scholarship, likewise competent Indian officials, were continually passed over in promotion in favor of some stripling fresh from "home"; even in industries a white man of inferior qualification would be placed over thoroughly equipped Western-trained Indians merely because of pressure from above, or because of the prestige of a white skin, or at times because of the ingrained inferiority complex among Indians themselves which quite often still led them to slight their own kind.

I was fully aware of all this seemingly hopeless complexity of problems in Indian life, of the apparent impossibility of finding any clear-cut solution, either for individual problems, or for social and national ones.

Suddenly a gladness swept through me over the fact that I belonged neither to the group of exploiting foreigners, nor to that of the indifferent luxurious Indians; I was glad that I belonged to India in a very different sense; glad of my own strange complex burden, glad of the terrible economic insecurity that had dogged my footsteps from the first day of my connection with India. Glad I was not *divided* from suffering India!

In Bombay my husband and I were to be guests in the family of our old friend Natubhai, in that terrible house on Princess Street, with its filthy stairways and littered courtyard. Much as I liked these friends, I had always felt a shrinking from the house. For this coming Bombay stay I had refused the offer of a Westernized Hindu to stop in his comfortable home in the European section—refused out of sheer pride.

As my Bombay-bound train slipped into the darkening night, while I watched the gleaming golden reflections in the quiet pools of the paddy fields, palms etched in bold black strokes against the burning sky, white cranes standing motionless by the waters, a new sense of

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harmony pervaded me. I suddenly thrilled not only to all this heart-gripping glory of color and line and movement of Indian life, but even to its misery. For the first time I felt no regret that the friends who would welcome me with open arms the next morning, lived in the sordid conditions of the average middle-class Hindu home. From the luxury and the colorlessness of my Westernized Indian friends, I was glad to come to this physically comfortless, but truly Hindu home.

For in that home the old spirit of India lived on in its kind thinking, its generous giving, its fundamental tolerance, its humble dignity—no effort whatever to emulate or simulate, or to appear well in Western eyes, yet a ready kindly acceptance of me and my differences.

What if their home were without visible beauty, and the hallways dirty and the street littered? Time would change all this. Industrialization, with its consequent concentration in cities, is so new in India that it is really still a largely rural population that is just trying to make its adjustment to city life, and is not yet successful at it. My friends, like thousands of other Bombay dwellers, still owned a large family house with spacious grounds in a small town a night's ride away from Bombay. Their city dwelling was still a sort of makeshift. Their children would ask more of, and put more into, this new city home.

Also, the day would come when no longer would an incredibly disproportioned amount of taxes be spent on keeping an immaculately clean and well-watered European town near a filthy Indian one. With progressive Indianization there would be less discrimination, less comfort for the whites, but more money for sanitation in the Indian section, more space, and a newly reawakened civic pride and civic consciousness.

All these were outward things awaiting certain transformation at the touch of the finger of time. In the West, too, sanitation and spacious living is still very young, although it has had no tropical climate to contend with. But what really mattered, I felt, was that the old, unbroken, high spirit of India still dwelt in that true home of my poorly housed Indian friends.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

In their tiny four-room flat our wonderful hosts crowded together so that the only room with a bedstead might be turned over to us. Somehow, this time, the frightfully cramped quarters and the dirt of the hallways outside did not prevent me from easily sharing in full the life of that family. Kamalabai, the wife, sat down and ate with me without the least trace of former constraint, and we had great conversations. Since I had seen her last, she had begun to take an interest in social and educational matters, had joined a woman's organization, and was questioning me about our life in the West. Kamala had gone on in her own slow way, yet even within a few years' time the distance covered was great. When I met her in my first Bombay days, I had longed to change everything about her, her home, and this building. Today I was wondering if she were not the tortoise and I the hare!

During that lonely ride from Benares to Bombay I had come in contact with a big truth, a new angle of my relationship to India, and felt closer to everyone, more willing to let them set their own pace, less desirous of changing things outwardly and forcibly. I felt more need of changing myself inwardly. The realization grew that out of inner attunement, outer harmony results. More confidence pervaded me now than ever before, more faith in the underlying currents of life. I sensed that if one allays the shallow turmoil of surface fears, doubts and criticisms and rests in the simple faith that no honest endeavor can go for nought, then somehow, in most unforeseen ways, doors open upon new possibilities.

Such unexpected things did happen with surprising quickness, affecting Sarang and myself. In less than a week's time after reaching Bombay he found a new position.

Parting from Natubhai and Kamala with more genuine warmth than ever before, we left Bombay immediately for the Deccan, where Sarang had been called in as a last hope for a moribund sugar concern.

Like so many others it had been built on the war boom with too

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little foresight and expert knowledge. Within a year's time the whole floor of the factory had tilted, throwing the machines out of gear, and had to be rebuilt. Moreover, the company had to buy its cane from independent growers round about who, knowing they could, with bullock-power mills, make brown sugar themselves any day at a good profit, took the attitude of "take it or leave it" and set such a high price that the margin between brown and white sugar was not wide enough to pay for the running of the factory. This was proof positive once more that Sarang's categorical assertion was true: white sugar enterprise in India cannot succeed unless factories grow their own cane. Because this sugar concern did not own its own land, neither Sarang's nor anyone else's best efforts could make a success of it. He realized this perfectly after we had been there for some months.

What, then, were we to do, when this present enterprise came to an end? No use wasting time again looking for jobs in established concerns when most sugar enterprises were dying. Better to start on a completely new foundation. But Sarang's earlier experience in attempting to float a joint stock company in his own province had taught him that he had little to hope for from anyone but himself.

After much deliberation, we came to the following conclusion: When this present contract expired Sarang would go back directly to his own native state where the young prince, whom he had known from childhood days, was soon going to be installed as ruling Raja. There he would be able to obtain a favorable and large enough tract of land on which to start from the ground up. It would take a year or so, Sarang surmised, for him to get things started there.

But my presence would offer insurmountable difficulties. Had he been married to a Hindu girl it would have been an easy matter to shift about or to be without an income for some time; for the joint family system of India makes mutual helping a matter of course. Such a wife would have been easily and naturally tucked away into some niche in his or her own wide-branched family.

But for an Indian who has married a foreign wife, matters are far more serious. I constituted a foreign element, unassimilable by his

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own ultra-orthodox family. Even in progressive Bombay and Calcutta we had found great difficulty. Sarang alone could slip into a dozen homes and be gladly welcome; I, too, going alone, felt reasonably welcome in several homes; but the two of us presented a problem that aroused misgivings. There was but one home in all India where we were welcome as a unit, that of our friends, Natubhai and Kamala, in Bombay.

At rare times in our wanderings, Sarang and I jointly had been guests in other houses. It generally resulted in this: Our hosts felt they must go out of their way for an American guest. This in itself always brought about an element of strangeness, which was not improved when, in the midst of any interesting discussion, husband, host, and friends would inevitably fall into the vernacular. I would sit by for hours in silence, trying to efface myself so that I might not disturb their enjoyment, yet sometimes unable to over come a feeling of hurt isolation. With contrition and apologies they would turn to me again. But I sensed in them, too, a touch of unrealized, or, in any event, unspoken, resentment over the fact that I could not join in. They did not know how difficult it was for me to become proficient in any of the four languages that I, with dogged effort, did attempt to learn: Hindustani, Bengali, Oriah, and Malayalam,' in turn. We had never stayed anywhere long enough to give me the sense of permanency necessary to serve as strong impetus. It is no easy matter to acquire an Indian alphabet with its forty-eight distinct vowels and consonants, its many new phonetic sounds and its countless additional signs for consonant combinations.

Another factor complicated this language question. My Indian friends were always eagerly entering on some discussion with me in English, but hardly anyone ever seemed to have time for tedious practicing with me in his own language. My own husband was the worst offender of all. From him I learned not one word of his own Oriah, and but one sentence in Bengali. This he taught me in California and not in India: *"Ami tomai borovalo bashe"*— "I love you very much."

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When such were the conditions in advanced parts of India, no wonder that Sarang could not take me to his orthodox, backwoods town until he had built a home of our own on that future plantation. But I dreaded looking forward to another period of renewed homeless wandering in India itself, so it was decided that in the intervening time I should go to Paris and there get what advantages I could for my painting. The plan seemed the best possible under all circumstances.

We had again been practicing the strictest economies and our huge mountain of debt was by now completely wiped out. Not only that, but by the time that Sarang's present contract would expire there would be more than a thousand rupees available for each of us to help us towards our separate starts.

Our present home was situated on a dead, flat plain, hot and dry. Not until I lived there did I know the utter blessedness of hills and mountains. This dreary flatness had a frightfully depressing effect on me. The only recreation possible for us was to take a stroll now and then in the evening along the raised embankment that flanked the straight-lined ugly canal. Nothing anywhere except sugar cane or burnt, yellow, limitless expanse of plain. It was the most god-forsaken place we had ever lived in.

Sarang had his work in the mill from eight to six, and much of that was spiced with discouragement, friction, and hopeless intrigue. As is so often the case in India, the place had been staffed with relatives and near-relatives of the owners, irrespective of their fitness or usefulness. They seemed to resent an outsider being called in, so Sarang had his hands full.

I, on the other hand, was absolutely without companionship. I did not know the local language, Gujerati. There were literally weeks and months at a stretch when I had no occasion to speak a single word to a living soul, save for the few orders to servants, and during the hours when Sarang was home.

In our determined effort to get free of debts, we had not even subscribed to a newspaper or a periodical, nor did we buy books at all. Unable to bear frequent freight expenses, we had even sold our

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library. Consequently, the discussions between Sarang and myself had no new fuel and turned forever around the little local doings; but there were times when he was too discouraged to speak even of those.

Almost four miles away there were some Australian missionaries in charge of the camp of a criminal tribe; but walking was out of the question in the broiling heat and, as no common interests drew me to them, I did not often care to spend the money for hiring conveyances. More and more I lost my deep inner assurance. A steady, breathless depression settled on me that no effort of mine could shake off. Even my painting was not able to lift me out of it. A number of small things happened to heighten this abnormality of psychic conditions. Once, for instance, one of the mill coolies burned himself frightfully. He was in charge of keeping up the fire, for a pump near the canal, and had erected a temporary shelter where he lived and prepared his own food. This time he had tried to hurry his cooking with the help of a bit of kerosene from the company's tin. The whole can caught fire, and his abdomen, chest, arms and part of the face were frightfully burned. He rushed to the dispensary, but the clerk asserted that, as he had stolen the oil and as his little hut was just beyond the edge of company property, the company was not bound to treat him.

The poor devil started to walk towards the dispensary of the Australian mission through the drumming noon-day heat, holding his cloth over his shoulders and away from his flayed body; but the agony was too much for him. Halfway there, in a burst of frenzy, he threw himself into the canal. He managed, however, to get out and to reach the mission.

I did not hear of this occurrence until a few days later, when I happened to call on the little nurse in charge of that dispensary. I was present when she dressed the frightful wounds with the utmost care and tenderness. Everything in me boiled when the details were told me, still more so when I heard that his pitiful wages had been stopped on the claim that he had not been hurt on company property. I spoke in hot anger when I reached home, and got Sarang's assurance that he

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would personally see to it that payment of wages would be resumed until the coolie got well. Then another day I lost control when I saw an incredibly starved dog, with huge running sores and stumbling from weakness, chased away from some houses by heavy sticks thrown at him. I myself treated and cared for that pariah, to have the satisfaction of seeing him turn into the sleekest, most loyal watchdog. No one, especially his former persecutors, ever managed to approach my house without his furious warning and protest.

One day one of my servants came to me at four o'clock, telling me that his wife was dying. Knowing that I was in my midday siesta, he had not wanted to disturb me sooner. I went at once to the miserable little hovel of a few poles, mats, and a bit of straw, so low one could not stand upright inside. The woman lay moaning, beating her head against the mud floor, twisted in agony. Feeling her body I came to the conclusion that she must have eaten something poisonous.

I chased her husband back for a big bottle of crude castor oil from my bathroom, and busied myself about her. Holding her nose while her husband fastened her hands behind her, we stopped her screaming and forced an enormous dose into her. The effect was instantaneous vomiting. Her condition grew better immediately. When I stepped out again, a crowd was standing nearby, gaping; but not one of those had come forward to help and every one of them would let the woman die rather than enter that untouchable hut.

A stone's throw away, on a comfortable veranda, there sat a group of Brahmins. Not one of them had lifted a finger nor shown the slightest interest. It must have been my own abnormal condition that made me go home to my house across the burning fields with a sense of broiling indignation against those Brahmins. I was fully aware of the unhealthy condition of my mind and despised myself for it, especially my temporary feeling of rising race-consciousness and superiority.

Then one day when the conditions of the mill were particularly critical, and Sarang had asked me to have lunch ready sharply at one, as he

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would have only half an hour to spare, things came to what was for me a tragic climax. In the middle of the morning I had taken accounts and given my orders to the cook. Normally, that was the end of my concern, and in due time lunch should have been announced. But when Sarang came and I called, there was no answer. I went out to the kitchen myself; it was empty. There was no sign of preparation and no sign of the cook. This was the man whose wife I had so lately treated.

There was nothing to do but try to get something ready myself. Laboriously I started the wood fire. I had great difficulty because there was not even any small wood ready. In streams of perspiration, for inside my cook-house the temperature was well over one hundred and ten, I stood in front of that fire, blowing desperately.

Just then the cook came into the kitchen. I saw at once that he had been drinking and turned upon him with hot reproach. He answered with an insolent remark. Before I realized what I was doing, my hand, holding a piece of wood, had shot out. I struck him twice; then, in a queer kind of horror, dropped the stick and ran indoors. I did not eat that day.

That I should have struck a man! I, who had been so indignant over the thrashings that Englishmen commonly give their Indian servants, and that even Indians are guilty of. For me to have done so degraded me in my own eyes. Would I have struck a white man under the same conditions? Or was it simply the first touch of the slow moral degeneracy that overtakes most white people in the tropics? I felt that the contrast between my treatment of my first Bombay servants and my present manner was it sign of such demoralization.

If India were doing this to me, it was time to get away, at least for a long enough period to regain my balance.

The incident, of course, was fuel to the antagonistic group that surrounded us. Knowing there would be gossip, and remembering that I had obtained that man through the help of the Australian missionaries, I went straight to them. Deeply shamed, I started to tell Mrs. X. all about it.

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"I don't wonder at all," she exclaimed, "I did exactly the same thing myself some years ago!"

Altogether, when the time came for final departure, I felt as if I were escaping a red-hot prison. As we drove to the station on our way to Bombay, the motion of the car threw a wave of heat into our faces from the gleaming yellow road, exactly as if we had been standing in front of the open door of a blast furnace.

The tiny branch railway connecting us with the main line had not even fans. Everything inside the compartment was hot to the touch. The outside of the car was too hot for the hand to bear.

The deadly memory of this is the most vivid impression that I carried to France with me.

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CHAPTER NINE

This was June, and the appalling heat followed me over the ocean. The Red Sea, too, was swept with furnace blasts from the desert shores. I lay supine in my steamer chair, lazily thinking over the past years. My thoughts reverted continually to the admission of Mrs. X., the missionary, that she, too, had come to the point of beating a servant. Curiously, this shocked me even more than my own deed. For at least I had not come to India with any claim to spiritual superiority.

It made me think over the various ways in which Christianity had come under my actual observation in India. The first had been at Cuttack, the capital of my husband's province. My walks often had taken me past the walls of the Christian cemetery. The first portion of this wall was low and broken down, covered with streaky old whitewash, and enclosed tumbled-looking, untended graves. Further on, the walls rose suddenly high, perfectly kept and spotlessly white. An equally high and well-kept wall divided the two parts of the cemetery. Through the barred gate of the second section I caught glimpses of big stone monuments and flower-covered graves. My Hindu friends gave me the explanation with a grin:

"Dark walls—dark dead Christians; white walls—white dead Christians. Even after death they are not permitted to mingle. We are wondering—are there walled spaces in the Christian heaven, too, to divide the races?"

My next-door neighbor had been a widow with five children on her hands. The crop of rice from small paddy fields sufficed to cover the family's needs for nine months out of twelve; but for the other three months, for clothing, and school fees, everything depended on what else the little woman could earn. She was a "Christian," though what came to the surface most was the deep-grained Hindu belief and a rich stock of superstitions.

When I was stung by a snake and insisted on its being killed, she moaned: "Oh, Memsahib, you will die, you will die, you have offended

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the Goddess."

When she was massaging my aching body with hands dipped in oil and warmed over a glowing charcoal fire, she begged:

"Memsahib, do let me bring my oldest daughter's new-born baby; if I just touch your hip with its left foot you will be well."

"How so?" I asked smilingly.

"Memsahib, the baby was born with that foot first, its touch is cure for all such pains."

This neighbor of mine was employed by the American Mission to do "bazaar work," each day visiting zenanas and chatting to the Hindu womenfolk about Christianity. For this service she and another Indian woman each received fifteen rupees a month. This particular year the mission had declared itself too short of money to afford the customary bullock cart, so the two women had to trudge the two or three miles to and from the bazaar in the broiling heat of the sun. The little woman, coming back to the cares of children and home, was physically weary from one week's end to another, yet could not dream of losing these fifteen rupees.

At this time my sweeper-boy Gobinda announced he was going to turn *punkah-walla* and earn "much more money" by pulling the American missionary ladies' ceiling fan between ten and four each day when they would rest in their cool stone rooms,—while their Indian field workers trudged through the heat for lack of funds for a conveyance! My next contact with things missionary came in Cochin. Jesuit monks stalked through the streets with great suavity and flowing robes, keen intelligence in their faces; Salvation Army people, simple farmer types, went about dressed in Indian costume. I had several Catholic converts among my servants. I found the Jesuits were keen and tolerant enough to make use of, instead of abuse, the local customs and superstitions, sometimes retaining a trait of the ancient Hindu religion merely by calling it by a Christian name.

The Jesuits were clever enough to endeavor to avoid wounding the sensibilities of the Hindus; the Salvation Army people simple and self-abnegating enough to adopt the life of the poor Indians

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whom they had come to serve. No cool, beautifully-servanted luxurious living theirs—such as Indians resent in the ordinary missionary. With admirable devotion they plodded indefatigably through hottest sun and deepest dust, or bicycled for miles to bring relief. They, indeed, could not afford a punkah boy. My Hindu friends did not discuss these with the bitter scorn they usually felt towards missionaries, but with warm appreciation of their well-meaning service.

"These simple people in their unassuming way do really seem to attempt to live the life their avatar exemplified. We like your Christ; his is a beautiful tale. It is easy for us to picture the life he led, wandering barefoot over the Galilean hills—its devotion, its simplicity, its sacrifice. It is one of the world's great stories and great lives. But his picture is darkened for us by the shadow that the intolerance and the way of living of most missionaries here throws across his image. We also don't think there is much reason to be proud of their converts."

As a matter of fact, Christian converts seem to have lost much both ways, and gained little; they have turned into a rather unprepossessing lot, aping the European, and scorning the "native." Wherever on an Indian street you see some woman in long trailing black gowns, such as were worn twenty years ago in the West, or a young girl in white with embroidered ruffles around neck and long sleeves, a wide starched skirt with voluminous underskirt, both trimmed with cheap machine-embroidered flounces, with flower-covered hat, coyly flourishing a parasol and fawning at whites—you know at a glance that she is either a Eurasian or a converted Christian. Your heart sinks at such travesty and loss of self-respect.

During my stay in South India, in the days when we were straining to pay back debts, when I was doing with fewer servants than any white woman and consequently answered a ring at the doorbell myself, there stood one of these women. She used her good English from the first instant to impress me with the fact that she was in no way a servant, and could be *so* very valuable; do all my fine sewing, see that those "native" servants did not steal—in fact, she could run my

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house. This was interspersed with a woeful tale of very great need, of inability to find any work at all in these bad times. I knew times were bad, and my pity was touched. But so was my self-interest—a sudden idea came into my head that I might possibly use this Christian-trained woman to help me make a success of trying to keep house "Californian" fashion in the tropics. That very morning, to the horror of even my sweeper, I had washed out some silk dresses myself.

"Very well," I said suddenly, "I will try you out. When can you start work?"

"At once, if you like," she answered. "Then in the afternoon I can go and fetch my things."

"Wait here," I said, and from my bedroom brought the freshly-washed silks to the dining room. I showed her how to sprinkle them and how to use the electric iron. Her face fell, and her eyes were goggling. There was none of the eager willingness that my simple Hindu servant at Bombay had brought to the mastering of that same task some years before. She touched the things with a clumsiness that was amazing in a woman whose hands were trained to expert needlework.

I suddenly realized that it was not clumsiness, but distaste, unwillingness, and silent protest. I could see she was fumbling to express this, yet afraid of losing a good chance to earn money. Irritated to find this prejudice against certain forms of work stronger in this Christian than in the Hindu servant, I had no intention of listening to her expression of it. Make up your mind by yourself, I thought, and I left her alone.

After some twenty minutes or so I came back to find her standing in embarrassed determination, idle. A half-ironed dress was lying on the table; the other things were as I had left them.

"Lady," she said, hesitatingly at first, "this work is too hard for me." Then with a sudden curious mingling of fawning and impudent scorn she added, "Maybe some low-caste servant will do this for you! One of the natives!"

Seeing me speechless with distaste, while I deliberately picked up

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the iron in front of her eyes and myself continued ironing, she realized that her chance to "run the house" for me was gone. Suddenly she whined:

"Lady, I have not eaten for two days. Give me two rupees and let me go! Or only one rupee, just one rupee!" she finished, cringing under my look.

I did not tell her, "Sahib is a Hindu and a native," I merely said: "I have offered you work, you scorn it. I pay well for work; but I have no money for beggars."

Some days afterwards a faint rumor came to me about my having insulted a Christian. I spoke to one of our accountants who was a convert, and gave expression to my deep feeling of the dignity of all work, and the disgrace of begging.

"You do not understand," he said gently, "the prevailing feeling here. You are free. But we cannot break through. We would lose all standing if we consented to do low work."

"But you are a Christian," I exclaimed in amazement. "Why do you keep up old caste beliefs? Don't you know that Jesus, whom you profess to believe in, was a carpenter?"

He kept a smiling silence. Then I asked him a question with eager confidence, and he saw I really wanted to know. He met it with a frankness which held a curious mingling of pride and apology.

"Yes, I myself would rather beg than do low work any day, if I were forced to the choice. I could socially retrieve myself from the first, but never from the latter!"

I felt it useless to tell him that when I saw Christians fail so signally, my thoughts reverted with a new and intensified appreciation to the Hindu, Gandhi, who voluntarily had taken upon himself sweeper's work to start his fight against the old taboo of untouchability.

Not only is Christian influence less effective than Indian reform, but Christian intolerance is amazing at times. An English acquaintance of mine, Mrs. P., was giving a party at which some missionaries were guests. Her windows overlooked a Mohammedan village. An incessant drumming and joyous shouting floated up, for it was the

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festival of Id. One missionary sprang to her feet with the exclamation: "How terrible to have to listen to this godless celebrating! I wonder why God doesn't wipe them out with an earthquake as He wiped out the heathens of Tokyo!"

But my closest observation of missionaries had come with that Mrs. X., who had told me to my undying surprise that she, too, had beaten a servant. Her and her husband's special care was a camp of Thakaris, a segregated criminal tribe. These had been hereditary thieves, with great pride and developed skill in their profession. As railroads, were built in India they had turned into railway thieves. While their families remained in a certain group of villages in the Bombay Presidency, the men scattered all up and down the breadth and width of India, plying their trade. Travelers waking from a sound sleep would find satchels, bedding rolls, and coats slit open and all valuables gone. Some very sharp instrument had been used. Suspicion would rivet on some fellow-traveler, yet no knife, scissors, nor razor could be found on him. And the valuables had been spirited away as if by magic.

Only after a long time was it discovered that these men carried in their mouths the tiniest knife, razor-sharp, shaped very much like a sickle, so dexterously adapted that it could safely be slipped around the back molar. But even after this discovery, their organized system of dropping the loot to accomplices outside the windows and their cleverness in disappearing, made detection and arrest almost impossible.

At last the postmasters of the above-mentioned villages informed the authorities of the fact that suspiciously large sums were continually being sent to certain families by money-order from all parts of India. The authorities leapt to the true conclusion, rounded up and arrested these families; women, children, and old men, then grabbed any unwary returning thief. The government then built large camps and took upon itself to find work in the surrounding district for the men. But when such work was not forthcoming, the government provided what other funds were necessary for the maintenance of all the families. Learning of this, most of the remaining absent men, unwilling to

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continue being parted from their families, gave themselves up cheerfully.

Our own factory employed some seventy-five of these men; we found them to be excellent workers. I myself took two as servants and found them honest and devoted.

This Australian mission, when the government was first faced with the problem of caring for the tribe, had no doubt visioned wholesale conversion. So they made this offer: Give us entire charge of the camp and we will pay half of the expenses, a proposition to which the government readily agreed. The mission itself consisted of a school, the living house for the missionary couple who were the heads of the institution, an orphanage, a dispensary and another house in which lived the medical nurse and the women who had charge of the orphanage for village children. The camp of the Thakaris itself consisted of a group of mud huts within a huge barbed-wire enclosure and a carefully guarded gate.

The dispensary with its nurse took care not only of their own group of charges, but of many from the nearby villages. There was a large hospital in the town itself, but somehow the little kindly nurse, although her medical knowledge was woefully limited, had much gentler hands and more warmth of heart, and made no distinction between people. So the poor came to her with far more confidence. She was a girl not yet thirty, but looked like forty, with tired wrinkles and yellow skin. She had come out to India from Australia a young, enthusiastic, pretty thing. The undreamed of misery that came to her door for relief gripped her so that she spent her strength without thought of self. She told me frankly of her conviction that religious teaching did not count unless and until the care of the suffering body came first. I myself am convinced that the best thing would be if all missionary work were turned into medical and educational channels.

As for the educational part of this mission, one thing struck me as interesting. In this region with its excessively high temperature and a mere thirteen inches of rain a year, it is the most natural thing

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for kiddies to roam around stark naked, or with just a strip of loincloth. The price of a little shirt would mean many days of food. But the mission's main rule is that no child may attend school without a shirt, a shirt apparently having some occult connection with Christian morality. Dozens of benighted heathen parents fail to grasp this, and perversely continue to buy daily rice instead of sending hungry children to school!

Early one morning I came to Mrs. X. on some unexpected and long-forgotten errand. She seemed very much upset. In the adjoining office some rather sharp recriminations were being vented. After a while, her husband came in, and both made an effort to talk to me in our ordinary, casual way. But what had upset them was still too new and too much for them to keep back. So I learned from their own lips the following story:

During sixteen years of teaching, preaching and caring for the Thakaris, they had made just exactly two converts. During the whole of the previous evening the sound of drums, singing and merry-making had floated over from the nearby camp. This continued right up and beyond the usual hour of compulsory quiet. At last, his patience exhausted and feeling his authority flaunted, Mr. X. went over. He found the whole camp in full celebration over the reconversion to Hinduism of one out of the two Christian converts! What hurt still more, was that they had taken special pains to educate this young man and had set high hopes on him, expecting him to become a great teacher of Christianity among his own people. I could not fail to observe that more hurt human pride ran through their disgusted tale than genuine grieving over a soul lost to the kingdom of their God.

I knew the reason for the meager number of conversions, and for the present reconversion: the absence of economic pressure and fear!

Somehow, this episode summed up and illustrated most thoroughly the conclusions concerning all Christianizing efforts that I had reached in my sojourning in India and my intimate contact with Indians of all grades and sects. Practically no Brahmins have ever been converted

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and very few among the other high-castes. By far the greatest number of converts is made among the untouchable castes in famine-stricken areas. During famines, as the only escape from starvation, hundreds will often go through a ceremony of conversion in a single day at the food centers opened by missionaries.

Hinduism itself is fundamentally so broad and all-inclusive that its more enlightened followers neither proselyte nor see any reason for deserting it for any other faith. Hindus are convinced that throughout all ages and all mankind, whenever the need arose, saviors appeared. Their ingrained tendency is merely to absorb into Hinduism in the most natural way whatever fresh message any new avatar may bring. It is in this very way that Buddhism and many other creeds sprang up or were imported and then gradually absorbed, leaving hardly any distinguishable outward sign.

I have heard the most beautiful appreciations of the inner meaning of Christianity from the lips of highly educated Hindus who were almost as familiar with the Bible and the Koran as with the *Puranas* and the *Upanishads*. The only man I know who expresses in daily life the true breadth, generosity and purity of the Christ-spirit is a Hindu—Mahatma Gandhi.

India has handed on a high culture for thousands of years by word of mouth. This has ingrained in its people a love for beautiful, heroic stories. Her wandering ascetics and priests will in a twinkling gather around them a crowd of eager listeners in some cool, sheltered courtyard and retell to rapt faces the tales of the great epics. The most common Hindu woman will love to listen to a missionary's story of Jesus and readily admit that he was a great teacher, nay, a savior even. But why should she be asked to believe Him the only one? She smiles.

The ordinary run of missionary who has never studied nor looked into Hinduism, so often mistakes this eager listening of Hindu women to the tale of Jesus as a sign of dissatisfaction with their own religion and a hunger for the new. The missionary stands in exactly the position

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that an Englishman would be in who claimed that Shakespeare was the only man on earth who ever wrote plays worth reading. The simple Hindu woman knows that a thousand paths lead to God, not only one.

Yet it remained for India to give me my first real appreciation of Christianity. But this came about not through Christian missionaries, but through Hindus. Hearing disinterested Hindu voices speaking dispassionately in pure ethical and intellectual appraisal, I myself could at last reach a clear view, and forget the haunting memory of the trammeling and quarreling of churches and dogmas, forget even that everywhere, wittingly and unwittingly, in the Orient the missionary has been the gatekeeper of the foreign trader and exploiter.

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CHAPTER TEN

Shortly after my arrival in Paris I went to the American School of Arts at Fontainebleau for fresco painting. It felt like coming home. This was the first of a series of fortunate and unexpected happenings. That whole period was a marvelous unfolding and blossoming of things artistic. I reveled in all that Paris had to offer, and incidentally also found my own artistic pace with great new joy and assurance.

I had the rare good fortune of having my work come under the notice of Comtesse Caraman Chimey and her sister, Comtesse Greffuhle (one of the first patrons in Paris of Isadora Duncan). Through the first, unexpected contacts opened out; through the second I obtained the use of a lovely little room on the Champs Elysee, overlooking the Rond Point. I boasted over being the owner of the smallest purse on the finest street of Paris.

I worked with unremitting enthusiasm and concentration, and had the satisfaction that same year of being accepted by the Grand Salon National, and of getting a commission for some large wall decorations for the Chateau St. Hubert.

The most unexpected thing, however, happened in December of that year (1925). I had just had a devastating fire in my room which left my scanty wardrobe frightfully reduced. One morning a note came from Comtesse Caraman Chimey, Lady-in-Waiting to the Belgian Queen, asking me to come and see her at nine o'clock the next morning at the St. Meurice, apologizing for the early hour.

I slipped on a gray woolen dress and a coat, the sleeves of both of which were slightly scorched, and wore a little green hat that had first been my pride and then my despair; it had been hopelessly singed. First throwing it away, then picking it up again with regretful, lingering love, I suddenly had the inspiration of turning it inside out, and thus it served better than ever. Dressed like this, I called at the St. Meurice.

Comtesse Chimey is a very fine miniature painter; it has always been a joy to talk over things artistic with her. In the midst of our

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conversation the Comtesse casually asked me if I would be free to spend that day in visiting some of the museums with Princess Marie Jose.

Of course I was; and off we went, just the two of us, to the Cornavalet, the Guimet, and the Louvre. My hands fairly itched during those hours to take off my hat and show the Princess the singed inside—it struck me as so amusingly incongruous.

As it was a dark, foggy day, we were turned out of the Louvre long before four o'clock. Then we stood on a street corner looking through the moving picture advertisements and finally decided to go and see "Madame Sans Gene." I shall never forget the wholehearted enjoyment of Marie Jose over the Montmartre dance and over the slipper scene at Napoleon's court. As for the museums, I proved a very poor guide; Marie Jose's knowledge and information were so much more thorough than mine.

We did not reach the hotel until seven o'clock, to meet a frightfully worried Comtesse who had been seriously wondering for the last hour and more what means should be taken to try to locate us. Marie Jose had had a dentist's appointment for five that afternoon, but had completely and conveniently forgotten it. I had been going through Paris that afternoon with a great sense of responsibility and with a sort of amused fear that I might mislay or misplace my Princess. Born Swiss democrat, I understood all at once how it had been that the Swiss through the centuries have formed the most trusted guards for royalty. So I felt very sorry to have the day end in such worry to the Comtesse and to the Queen. In view of this, I was happily surprised to be asked to spend the following day again with the Princess, at the dentist's and at a concert in the Salle Gaveau. Besides the presence of the Princess, another incident imprinted the memory of this concert on my mind: At the end of an impassioned rendering of Chopin's Funeral March, the pianist fainted dead away at his instrument.

In my painting, my first great chance brought others in its train. From having found myself one day with less than three hundred francs in my pocket and no idea where more would come from, I now was

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doing better financially than ever before.

At last, the opportunity offered itself for me to go to the United States for some fresco work. I was wild to take it, as it seemed so long since I had seen the States. I wrote to my husband concerning this, but in answer received an urgent plea to return to India instead. "You have been away almost a year," the letter stated; "if you go to the States it will be two whole years before you return, and I am afraid you may never come back. Things here are moving along splendidly, and by October at the latest I will have a house built on our plantation and in shape to receive you."

The taste of that last year of failure of mine in India was still bitter on my tongue. I did not want any relationship between me and India or between me and my husband to be permitted to end on an inharmonious note. So, towards the end of the second summer, I left for India, via Ceylon. The intense artistic stimulation with which I had come away from Paris, now for the first time made me really eager to see all I could of Indian art.

So, on my slow way north towards Calcutta, I visited Anuradhapura in Ceylon, saw some of the ancient temples of South India, and had a delightful week with Doctor Cousins and his collection of modern Indian paintings at Adyar. While I was in France my husband had gone back to his native state, Dhenkanal. On foot and horseback, on elephant and bullock cart, he had spent months seeking out the most favorable tract of land large enough to turn ultimately into a huge sugar concern. He finally found such a one where he had every reason to believe that a few years later the continuation of the branch railway line would be built.

Then, with the help of the state surveyor, mapping had started. When he wrote to me urging me to return, the surveying was almost finished; he saw a clear road ahead to start development at once. Then it was discovered that the new maps did not agree with the only existing government maps. Sarang's showed the existence of a large tract of land which neither village nor state maps indicated, so the whole thing had to be done over again. Wedding ceremonies or some

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such celebrations were considered sufficient to delay the state surveyor for weeks from getting down to the task of revising.

Months passed, just over this map business. Still more months passed over the red-tape delay of the final signing of papers for which the sanction of the Maharaja and the British Political Agent both were required, the latter demanding a higher price per acre than the Maharaja himself.

As a matter of fact, when I reached India, there was no possibility of a home being ready, for the final deeds had not yet even been drawn up. My husband came from Dhenkanal to Cuttack to meet me. We had not seen each other for almost a year and a half, yet he had to hurry back to Dhenkanal after just two days together because of important interviews concerning these deeds.

He had written to me to Paris that in New Delhi, where huge government buildings were under construction, there were going to be big opportunities for mural decorations, and now suggested again that I try for some of those. With that in mind, I went to Calcutta, where I had half an hour's interview with Lord Lytton. He showed a genuine interest and a very winning personality, but told me that the government had met with bitter opposition on the part of Indians, both in the House and in the press, against the calling in of any but Indians to do these decorations. Knowing that Indian painters had all of them been working small-scale only, small water color and miniature, and that the ancient art of large-scale fresco had died out, the government had wanted to call in some experienced Western mural painter to put in charge, under whom the Indians should work.

"But *legally* I am an Indian," I protested.

"I doubt that the opposition that is so bitter would take that into account."

Lord Lytton, however, took the first opportunity to introduce me to Sir Edwin Lutyens, the designer and architect in charge at New Delhi. From him, too, for the same reason, I received no encouragement whatever.

So there I was, back again at the old conclusion: as an independent

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worker I got it in die neck from both sides, Indian and English. When there was something good to be had for Indians, I was told: "You are a foreigner." When there was something good for foreigners, I heard: "You are an Indian now."

A few prizes in general exhibitions, a bit of recognition in the press, and an occasional purchase were all I could hope for in my painting.

From various sources I heard more about the New Delhi buildings and decorations. There was general resentment everywhere. The Indian press was bitter against the spending of such vast sums just for display on new government buildings, while India was groaning under unbearable taxation, so that the poor people actually could not afford salt for their food. Justified criticism, as I verified later, was also directed against the inappropriateness of style— imitation of the Roman side by side with bastardized Indian! One also heard rumors of vast profiteering and bad construction. I was present myself in the newly-opened Assembly Hall when a brick dropped down from the ceiling a few feet away from the president's chair, almost killing a secretary.

Then Indian artists had opposed the calling in of Europeans for the decorations. That idea was dropped and the government announced a competitive selection. But recognized outstanding Indian artists resented this again. Devi Prasad Chaudhuri, great sculptor and painter both, told me with scornful pride: "Why should I compete with every Tom, Dick, and Harry? They are even accepting student's work! If they want me, they know my address!"

I, too, under such warring and uncertain conditions, did not care to submit any work.

An old friend of mine, member of the Legislative Assembly, had seen my large decorations and portrait work in Paris, asked my prices, and on the spot given me the assurance of two portrait commissions should I come to Delhi. But when I was actually there and got down to brass tacks, I realized that because of friendship, he expected me to do those portraits for fifty dollars apiece. "I'd rather do them for nothing," was my answer, and that ended the matter and his support.

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Another chance, a decoration for a living room, for which the owner of the house himself had already ordered canvas from Bombay, also fell through because I insisted on a written agreement at fixed prices.

I spoke of this in surprise and disgust to my English friend, Mrs. A. "It's useless," she said, "Mademoiselle X. was here last year doing quite a bit of portrait work, charging only one hundred dollars apiece. She had a devil of a time collecting, and in one or two cases did not even succeed in getting the unpaid-for portraits back."

This failure, coming on top of my Paris success, the slipping away of the considerable savings I had made there, the slow development on the plantation with its deferred hope of a home, all served to throw me into moods of discouragement. There were times when I regretted having broken into that spell of painting in Paris only to find myself once more a wanderer in India. There were times when I felt inclined to be a bit resentful towards my husband for his lack of foresight, only to realize at once that he himself could not possibly have foreseen all this annoying Indian slackness and procrastination. But as I have found over and over again, what seemed the worst possible conditions at any given time, ultimately really turned out to have been the best. It was during this year of renewed, forced wandering that I made most of my fine contacts with Indian art lovers and Indian artists and could study deeply enough to have the great beauty and significance of Indian art revealed to me.

It was then that I made my pilgrimage to the greatest monuments of the Mohammedan period, went to the two-thousand-year-old sources of Hindu art, the rock-cut temples of Ellora and Ajanta, and copied some of the magnificent frescoes of the latter. It was here that I ultimately realized that Grecian influence in part, and Western influence on the whole, was decadent and negligible in its effects on Indian art; that what was truly valuable sprang out of the core of Indian life and thought itself. And despite the hard way it hit me personally, I hailed the strong movement in present-day India that resents further Western participation, artistic domination and imposition, and hungers to win its way back to its own pure Indian source.

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It was this stark inner isolation and homeless wandering that was, unrecognized at the time, probably the greatest boon India bestowed on me. It drove me on in my search of the things of lasting value in Indian culture, and kept me from being engulfed too soon in the conflict of little things, the piling-up of personal unadjustable problems, such as many of the other white girls married to Indians could not escape from.

Personal connections might break, but spiritual links are unbreakable. While some of these girls felt more and more that they were imprisoned by all the drawbacks of India, I began to feel more and more *married to India*, to her art, her thought, her striving.

Even the failure of personal dreams only forged stronger inner links. One of the dearest dreams of most women will always reach out toward a child, but mine was shattered.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Deep within me there has always nestled the desire for a child. Deep within me, too, I always had a strange premonition that such is not to be for me in this lifetime. Public opposition to interracial marriage had made it almost impossible to find suitable quarters for us in crowded Berkeley in 1918. The direct result of the strain of this fruitless hunting was the loss of my unborn child. Side by side with my rebellion against the injustice of this, there had spoken an inner voice that it was best so.

After we had reached India I realized that a child of mixed blood is not wanted in present-day society. There is a large group of Eurasians in India, mixtures between whites of many nations and between Indians. The very fact that they object to this ethnologically correct term to the extent of having had an act passed in the Indian Legislative Assembly that entitles them to be called "Anglo-Indians" shows how little sure and proud they are of their racial ground. Most of these come from low strata, progeny of Tommies and *ayahs.* Most of them are inclined to stress the presence of white blood in their veins, ape the European and scorn things Indian, losing the best and keeping the worst of both races. But even the few who have sprung from the upper stratum of both races are looked down upon with suspicion and distaste by both Indians and Europeans. Neither Hindu nor European society in India has any true place for them.

Realizing this, I felt that I could look a child of mine in the eyes only if I were able to assure it of the highest educational opportunities to make it especially fit to meet the difficult problems that would face it; able to assure it beforehand of enough economic independence to live in whatever country it would ultimately feel most drawn to and be most at home in.

I saw no grain of possibility of such economic assurance for years to come. Should I have a child, and should illness snatch me away, there would be no way out for my husband but to let it go into the care of his family. They would be kind in an over-indulgent, undisciplined way, but to imagine a girl child of mine in an orthodox Hindu family that

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still clung to caste and purdah—no, it was not to be thought of!

At times I brushed the thought of a child completely out of my mind; at other times I longed desperately for the economic security that might, after all, make it permissible. Out of this conflict a strange persistent hurt arose that often threatened to turn to bitterness and into unreasonable personal accusations. My mind forgave and understood, but my body, my subconscious, never did.

For a while, this brought about an inner revulsion against all thought of sex and made it impossible for me for months at a time to give myself. I still marvel, in retrospect, at the great self-control and deep kindness of my husband in those trying times. Sometimes, remembering the slight, momentary, and purely physical distaste against contact with a dark skin that I had felt at first, and with which my psychic self had no connection whatever, I almost persuaded myself to the belief that this was a race feeling, that I did not wish to bear a child to an Indian. But then I would recall how entirely absent such a thought had been during the few glad months of my pregnancy in Hawaii and realize it was simply that I could not bear to think of a child of mine in present-day India.

It was not physical, but mental and social aspects that I feared for a child. The mingling of European and Hindu blood seems to favor physical beauty, but to bring forth mental strain, warring duality of soul. Or else this psychic conflict is imposed from the first baby years through inimical social conditions surrounding these children. No matter how protected they are, insidiously, conflict and pain creep in. Even beautiful three-year-old Indira, child of a brilliant Hindu scholar and of an Austrian mother, one day placed her tiny hand on that of her mother, looked attentively and then said in a hurt little voice: "Oh, mother! Why is your hand so white and mine so brown!"

From my first entrance into India, I could not fail but make many observations on inter-racial marriages both from the white and the Hindu aspects, because, as mixed marriages in India among the upper castes are still comparatively very few, they are, of course, very much in

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the limelight. Everyone feels justified in discussing them with the wildest speculations, where facts alone would usually be more than sufficient. All those of which I carne to know had taken place outside India or immediately upon arrival of the girl in India, except for one marriage where a white girl decided to marry an Indian after a prolonged stay at Shantiniketan. This is the poet Tagore's institution, which offers in itself unusually favorable conditions that are not duplicated in other parts of India.

I have discussed the question of inter-racial marriage with many Indians. Most of them agreed with me that times are not ready to give such unions much chance of success. Many expressed the opinion that white girls fail to make an honest attempt to become assimilated, and attributed this to the feeling of their belonging to the race of the rulers. Most white wives acquire after their marriage, in India itself, the psychology of white superiority that marks the majority of foreigners in India.

"If all of you adopted Indian dress, used our speech, and accepted our ways of living, we would not hesitate to treat you utterly as one of us."

That might well be true in the case of the most liberal groups of intellectual Calcutta, or purdah-free Bombay, but even if a white girl wholly adopted Indian ways, there is still much in them that would continue to exclude her from an intimate share in social and domestic life.

Moreover, East and West should be able to meet on a basis of perfect understanding and tolerance, without need of utter absorption of either into the other.

I once discussed this question with Abbas Tyabjee.* I had expressed to him my sorrowfully gathered conviction that where I had hoped to help, I often found I actually hindered my husband in work and relationships, that this was inevitable in mixed marriages within an antagonistic society. He confided to me that as a student in England he had been in love with an English girl, but had been refused. Then he

* Gandhi's appointed successor, arrested in 1930 for carrying on Gandhi's work and breaking the salt Jaws.

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had married among his own group in India. To the success of this marriage I can testify, for I have had the rare privilege of living with them as a guest for some time. The relationship between parents, children, and other members of the family was marked by genuine courtesy and tender affection, and stamped with great ancient culture. And over the whole home there floated the loveliest music that I had heard in India, from the lips and the fingers of Roihanna, the youngest daughter; music such as the bazaar and the tourist knows nothing of, such as drifted through the exquisite marble screens of the Moghul palaces of old and still lives on in a few rare old homes.

Abbas Tyabjee had, during one of his later trips to England, seen that English girl of his youth again. Talking over old days, she had expressed the hope that her erstwhile decision had not made his life unhappy. Abbas Tyabjee laughed: "You did me the greatest kindness of my life by refusing me!" We went on to speak of my own sense of homelessness, and other aspects of the troublesome question of mixed marriages. "An Indian is a cad who marries a white girl and brings her here!" Abbas Tyabjee exclaimed.

I was astounded at the extreme words and also moved, for I felt back of them a great generous sympathy for uprooted Western girls.

After a few minutes' silence, I assented: "Maybe— he realizes what he is doing. But I do not think any of them do. I doubt if the young men who leave India and study abroad really ever understand their own society in its possible relation to foreign wives. Most of these students have led sheltered lives; they leave before they have seen much of their own India. And for what they have seen they have no proper measure, for in the experiences of childhood and early youth one lacks all standards of comparison." "I suppose that is so," Abbas Tyabjee mused. "I feel sure of it," I went on, remembering warmly my own husband's honesty and lack of guile. "When they go abroad, the foreign life seizes them with all its intense newness and diversity at a time when they are mentally most impressionable. The old life of India recedes into soft warm

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memories, hedged around by fierce protectiveness of thought. I am convinced the majority of students, irrespective of whether they have established relationships with Western girls or not, return home to discover an India which to them is almost as unexpected and new and in, some ways as disconcerting as it is to us. I do not think that many of them voluntarily misrepresent in order to lure. Several of my Hindu friends, American-returned, seem to resent their society's compulsion and bodily discomfort and slackness far more than I ever did. All of them require years to retrieve their balance and settle down harmoniously into Indian life."

"Yes, I know, it is a very difficult adjustment to the majority, and very complex."

"Several among my Hindu friends that I know intimately have never again made their peace with their own country. I believe at times it would be best if no Indian ever left for study abroad!" "Oh, no!" Abbas Tyabjee dissented. "I do believe in going abroad; I do believe in forming contacts with the West! I still remember with joy the dear European friends of my student days, and my life would be narrower now without those contacts. But we must meet as equals. There has lain the trouble. In my generation we were treated as equals in England, only to return here and find ourselves insulted by Englishmen in our own country. Not till we are free and can meet as equals can both sides truly profit. Then we of the East can make happy use of the material gifts that you of the West have the power to bestow, and not until then will the West take without condescension what we in turn have' to offer."

There was deep sorrow in the voice of Abbas Tyabjee as he spoke. We had gone for an early morning walk, and were sitting on the sere grass under a huge mango tree on a large maidan facing his house in Baroda. I looked at him and my heart ached. Splendid old figure of a man, huge frame, keen eyes in a ruddy face, a dazzling warm smile, gleaming white hair and beard—an eighty-year-old patriarch on whom approving eyes would turn in any country, into whose palm I yearned to slip a confiding hand as into that of a

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father! What arrogant blindness on the part of Westerners living in India that leads them to believe it not worth while to meet such men as he on the only basis of true human contact: respect based on equality.

I went on to tell Abbas Tyabjee confidingly that I had never regretted having come to India, nor the past years of my marriage, because it had led me to so much inner gain, to the realization of so much hidden meaning, to a deep love for the beauty of India, and sympathy for its infinitely patient sorrow. But, remembering his life-long helpmeet, kindly Mrs. Tyabjee, adored by every member of the family, understanding all, sitting day after day in the garden or on the veranda, with every child of the household, from relatives' to cook's and sweeper's, at her feet at lesson time, I could not refrain from adding how I felt that we Western girls could not possibly fill the deepest need of Indian husband and home. None but Indian women could do so completely. The greatest and most unselfish wish on my part was that my husband should some day re-marry and find such a helpmeet among his own people, who would be what I could not: a living part with him of his own society, and bear him children that would truly belong and be accepted without discrimination, sons that could be trained into and carry on the great work he had undertaken, daughters to twine themselves around his lonely heart.

"If I knew of a Hindu girl with education and understanding great enough to realize what his type of pioneer's work in the jungle means for India, and therefore with courage enough to face the isolation of the jungle with him, I myself would—as your women sometimes do—gladly choose her for him as second wife!"

How many among the Western girls married to Indians feel as I do I have no means of telling. Few, I suppose, for my intellectual and emotional background differs very widely from theirs. Most of them were less, or not all, interested in India, but simply had been in love with an Indian student. Consequently, when something went wrong with that love, or when it cooled, they tended to turn against everything Indian, wishing intensely to be out of it all and away!

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I had been in Bombay but a short time when I met Mrs. A., the first among the women inter-racially married with whom I was to come into contact. She was a splendidly developed, healthy animal, with a warm, generous heart readily open to appeal, a primitive sense of beauty, color and adornment, a conscious reveling pleasure in the body. She took a child's joy in dressing in the gorgeous silks that her husband generously showered on her, in the free use of her motor, the rich ease that her servants permitted. Hers was a material fullness of life far beyond any she could have dreamed of in her England.

There was no culture nor liking for culture about her. She read rarely, and nothing but novels. Her Hindu husband, on the other hand, was a radical intellectual of unusual brilliance. A primitive sensuousness had drawn the two together before either of them was out of the teens.

He had married her as a student in England and she had borne him his first son there. His father, one of the wealthiest men of a northern province, had had distinctly different plans for his son. His method of showing disapproval was to withhold the young man's allowance. Consequently, there had been worries even before the husband, hoping to arrange matters, returned to India alone. Here he found himself absolutely dependent on his father. As no wife had accompanied him back to India, and as Hindu society does not take Western marriages very seriously, the father exerted the pressure of his economic advantage little by little to force the young husband toward a second marriage. Under Hindu law there was no need of first dissolving the previous one.

Meanwhile the young wife with his little son waited patiently in England for good news. But instead of being called to India, letters began to come more and more infrequently and at last ceased altogether. Her money ran short; she made up her mind to pick up son and baggage and go directly to her husband. Somehow she managed to borrow the money, and slipped away. Nearing India she wirelessed to her husband, but no answer came.

Some English travelers, learning of the details, were indignant and advised her to return at once to England. In Bombay they took her to

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the Taj-Mahal Hotel, to await the next steamer for home. She was fearfully hurt over not being met and not even receiving an answer to her wire. But the next day a friend of her husband came. Somehow, Indian fashion, he had failed to meet her at the steamer as her husband, who could not come himself, had asked him to do by wire.

The sudden appearance of the English wife put a stop to Hindu marriage arrangements. All that her husband could do was to persuade his father to take them into the joint family home. Had she known more of Indian conditions, she would have realized that this acceptance and concession on the part of a proud, wealthy father, whose dearest plans had been shattered by her, was a generous enough attitude; but, instead of feeling appreciation, her's was a hurt rebellion against the restraints placed upon her.

The young couples were given one room to occupy. The women of the family observed purdah and she herself was not expected to come out into the hall or reception room when her father-in-law or any of his friends were there. In fact, for the two years that she remained in his house, she never saw his face. Her husband managed, however, to let her meet some of his friends, and at last, tired of her seclusion, she made a habit of slipping secretly out of the window of her room for outings and recreations with these friends.

Then her second child was born. Her father-in-law grew immensely attached to this boy born under his care. So little by little she gained her proper place and real consideration. Even the father-in-law recognized her right to a different way of living from that of his other Indian-born daughter-in-law. So, at the time that I came to know her well, her's was as unrestricted and independent a life as any girl's in the West; but instead of being made tolerant of things Indian through appreciation, she fretted for the things that she could not get.

She did not get the social treatment in official society that an English woman with an English husband of the same high position as her own would have been entitled to. Her training and education were not such as would have assured her particular considerations in England itself; but in India, where every white skin claims social superiority on

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the mere strength of its whiteness, she resented slights.

In retaliation, she took every opportunity of asserting herself. I had watched her one day in the Legislative Assembly Hall. She was beautifully dressed, radiant in health and physical attractiveness. Her chair in the back of the visitors' balcony was always surrounded in the intervals by young Swarajist members from the floor. This was in 1924 when the Indian tiger was frightfully worrying the British lion; when, with concerted action, the Swarajists threw out one government motion after another and in the end dramatically walked out in a body. While the session was on, she had frantically applauded Swarajist action and waved to her Indian friends on the floor of the House, who seemed as pleased that an English woman should so openly side with them, as she was to be the center of their attention during intervals. On the other hand, I could see disgust and scorn on English faces when watching her. This public championing of the Indian cause and her display of her popularity with the younger set of Indians was her way of hitting back at her own race for the fact that she was ignored.

But, really, in her talks with me, I realized that she did not feel deeply over any question at all. She did not feel at home in India, despite Indian husband and children, and hers was a bitter and outspoken dislike for most things Indian. Her dream was to be able to return permanently to Europe; doubting her ability to regain a place in her own home in England, she was thinking of France.

It also hurt her deeply to find even her children slighted. The boys would come home, for instance, from an outing in a public park, their little faces all puckered and hurt. Nestling against the mother's knees, they would exclaim:

"Mommy, why won't they play with us? Mommy, why do they laugh at me?"

Their ayah would then come forward with the explanation that, although these children of mixed blood, with their clear olive skin, fine features, and glorious black eyes and hair, were dressed in perfect English fashion, yet some English mother or nurse had sharply called her own charges away when the children attempted to play together.

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Such occurrences Mrs. A. had no other way of meeting than by flying into a rage against everything—the English who hurt her and her children, her husband for being Hindu, and India for being India and not England. If, at such times, her husband happened to be conveniently near, there were terrific quarrels, out of which she would issue more discontented and unhappy than ever.

Yet there was no way out, for there were the children: both parents deeply attached to them, neither willing to do without them. And the economic power continued to lie in the hands of the husband.

Another phase of their relationship also still held. Lovable warm-hearted but thoroughly impulsive, unreasoning, and uncultured, she was mate for her husband in none but the physical sense. But in this particular way they still attracted each other.

She lacked mental, emotional and spiritual foundation and preparation to help her adjust herself to surroundings and a civilization so different from her English background.

When last I saw her, she was the bitterest and most superficial critic of things Indian, and more than ever like an overgrown lost child that had slipped out of a safe English garden and got lost in a maze of alien streets.

I came to know of another inter-racial marriage during my first few months in India. I was bidden to attend the Hindu wedding ceremony of an English girl, Mrs. B., whose husband had already married her under binding English law. I declined, and consequently did not meet her until several years later. My declining had nothing personal in it; it was simply that I did not believe in these shows of Hindu ceremonies for Westerners—just as little as in the taking part of Hindus in Christian ceremonies if it were purely a matter of form and there lay no conviction back of it. The Arya Samaj, that great reform society of religious origin in northern India, had initiated conversion and marriage ceremonies. As an actual fact, orthodox Hindu belief, based on the theory of karma, admits of no conversion: Hindus are born, not made. I felt about these ceremonies as I felt about

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Indian dress. Hindu belief has very deep and beautiful aspects, and Hindu dress is beyond question more beautiful than our Western; but I, for one, never saw any reason for wholly adopting or wholly rejecting either. I prefer an eclectic attitude.

Moreover, my Hindu friends showed such disproportionate elation and gratification whenever a Westerner adopted their religion or the dress that this in itself kept me back. There seemed to be a touch of inferiority-complex about it that I did not want to encourage. I wore the sari whenever it seemed appropriate, as, for instance, at Indian dinners that required sitting on the floor, but retained for house and tennis and the street my easy, loose short frocks that did not constrain the waist as the *sari* does, nor hampered quick movement and running.

Indians in India should be as sure and proud as Westerners are in the West. It gives us no thrill and we barely pay any attention to the fact that most Orientals in the West adopt our clothing. But in India I should have preferred all of them without exception in Indian dress rather than in the sort of costume worn commonly in Indian towns: a Western coat over shirt-tails hanging: down outside over trousers or *dhoti*. This hybrid costume has by now pervertedly turned into a mark of distinction even in outlying villages.

It was a combination of all these reasons that had kept me from attending the Arya Samajist Hindu wedding of this Mrs. B., who had married a Hindu Engineer in England, and was now coming to Bombay to find three step-children awaiting her, the oldest a girl of twelve, the youngest not much more than a baby in arms.

Some four years later I met her in one of the hill stations. She came directly to Mrs. A., and was for the first time taking a vacation alone with her own little child, a bright, handsome but fearfully spoiled boy. She was a sweet, clean-cut little woman, with a simple sincerity that went straight to my heart.

Just then, she was very much upset. She came fresh from the first real quarrel of their married life, and this at the parting before a prolonged absence. There was no question that she still loved her

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husband dearly, but trouble, though not yet acute, had long been accumulating. It had nothing to do with the immediate relationship between the two, who were apparently both fine characters and well-mated; it lay in irreconcilable family and social conditions. The wife had come from England a mere chit of a girl of eighteen, knowing beforehand that three orphans awaited her mothering and not one bit daunted by this problem that would have held off most older women. She told me with tender humor: "When I first entered that room in Bombay, there stood the three of them lined up against the wall like organ pipes, dressed up gorgeously with flowers in their hands, with frightened eyes and dumb with shyness. They could not say a word to me, nor I to them; I simply went over, put my arms around them and kissed them all!"

Just then, her own boy was up to some naughty trick. She turned to me with loving despair: "I cannot do a single thing with him— the other children spoil him so outrageously; they simply adore him."

Little by little I could not help but glean details. She had immediately adopted and won them all; they were in her unrestricted care and adored her. The husband's family were glad enough to be relieved of all care while the children were small. But now that the oldest girl was full-grown, the family kept on interfering, in fact, had done so for quite a while. They were planning and arranging an early, old-style Hindu marriage for her, feeling the children belonged to the family, but Mrs. B. considered they belonged only to her husband and to herself. She opposed their plans, but somehow they had managed to influence the child herself when she was visiting them. Suddenly, where there had been perfect peace, there now was friction. Somehow, over some issue, her husband had sided with his family—the cause of this first quarrel from which she, as I saw, was suffering.

Three years later, as the dinner guest of a Hindu captain with an English wife (whose first conversation with me was about her feeling of isolation), I passed through the hall of a large hotel in Mussoorie, There sat, in exquisite white furs, a woman with a gayly made-up face but great, discontented eyes. Something very tragic but very familiar in

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them struck me. I looked again but could not place her, so passed on in uncertainty.

"Who is that woman?" I asked my hosts the moment I reached them.

"Oh, don't you know? That is Mrs. B."

"Are they all up here, too?"

"Who?"

"Her husband and children."

"No, the two don't get along."

I kept silent, not wishing to discuss it, for a great pity swept through me at the thought of the restless, lonely figure that had undergone so strange a change from that of the sweet, unassuming, happy little wife of former days. Another marriage, I thought to myself, which might have remained happy, had both belonged to one race and one society. The admirable character of both had not been able to save it from shipwreck in the uncharted, incalculable seas of this alien society that has no background and no safe footing to offer to such as they.

Then there was Mrs. C., whom I met first when she was already the mother of two children. The younger was an exquisite, frail, fairy-like thing with immense eyes that looked at you with shy friendliness. She was the only child of mixed Hindu and white blood that I have seen in whom the dark eyes and dark hair of the father did not predominate. The family was living European-style in a very beautifully furnished, expensive apartment. I was told she had been a stenographer "or something like that" in England. She seemed sweet, and devoted to her children and to her husband, whose financial position, despite his high salary, was rumored to be very insecure. The main cloud over their life seemed to be that she was an epileptic whom doctors had advised never to have children. The latter were inclined to be ailing. I was told that her very intellectual and highly educated husband had been categorically informed by the doctor that she must under no condition have another child.

Then I lost track of her. Many years later I heard there had been a third child. Some Hindus were discussing the case. They remarked with

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scorn that she was just one more white woman untrue to her husband and caring nothing for her children, that she in fact had run away with another man. Her countrywoman, Mrs. A., whom I saw in Delhi in 1927, told me that she could not understand Mrs. C.'s leaving the children, but otherwise did not blame her for running away. With scorn as cutting as that of the Hindu critics she added: "But what on God's earth I cannot understand is, that she was fool enough once more to go with another Indian!"

One picture flashed through my memory: I saw Mrs. C., when I was her dinner guest in Bombay, begging leave and disappearing into the bedroom from where there had come a childish whimpering and an ayah's soothing voice. She had reappeared with her adorable little fairy-child flushed and fretting with fever. She sat down in the red glow of the lamp, rocking the child and crooning a little song with utter sweetness.

Who was there to say what had gone on in the heart of that mother to bring her to the point of being willing to part with her children?

Shortly after this I met the husband again. After many vicissitudes darkened by unpleasant shadows, he was at last on sure economic footing, and a more brilliant talker than ever. It was he who told me his side of the story. A mutual Hindu friend had fallen in love with his wife and she, apparently, with him. The man had tried his best to persuade her to run away with him— but there were her children. When unable to move her, the man threatened suicide. So at last she came to her husband with a frank avowal: "What am I to do?"

"I don't care a damn whether you stay or go, but I think you might consider the children," was the answer she received.

Then the husband made this ultimatum: he would pay for her and the children's expenses at some hill-station, provided she gave an absolute promise never to see that man again. Whatever the reason, apparently this she had, been unable to do. So at the time that the husband told me the story, the children had been taken away from her and were in charge of their Hindu grandmother.

Remembering a day in Bombay when the young wife—who had

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given me that impression of gentle sweetness and great devotion—had been found in the bathroom unconscious with her head cut open after one of her epileptic fits, and thinking of her somewhere in friendless India separated from her children and loaded down with opprobrium, there was no other feeling in my mind than that of an intense pity for all involved, and just a touch of resentment against the husband. For when anyone, husband or wife, guilty or not, is frank enough to come to the other with any avowal whatsoever and seeking advice, the answer: "I don't care a damn whether you go or stay," seems over harsh.

One day a Hindu acquaintance whom I had known in California approached me with a request. A letter had come from an American mother in California asking for information about her daughter. I was told that a Hindu had lived in their family and had been treated almost like a son. Suddenly he had disappeared with their daughter, who was barely out of high school. The parents, searching frantically, came across the information that this young student had sailed, leaving debts of several hundred dollars behind, and, further, that he had a reputation for being inclined to drink. It was not until weeks later that they received a letter from their daughter telling them not to worry, that she was very happy and on her way to India, and that her husband had brilliant prospects there.

The mother had written an entreating letter trying to get indirect but more certain information as to the fate of her daughter. This letter stated that the father's hair had turned white with worry; that money had been deposited with the American Consul for her return whenever she should care to avail herself of this; and that her parents wanted her to know that they would always be glad to have her back.

My Hindu informant told me that he was not able to reach the girl directly, and that none among his group would be able to gather true information or correctly deliver the message. He had heard that the young girl's husband was in desperate circumstances—without work and without prospects—and that the young wife had for some time been compelled to live in his father's family and was doing without the

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things considered essential for the comfort of a white woman in India.

Reluctantly, I consented to go and see the girl. Purposely, I did not inform her ahead of the time of my arrival. The husband answered my knock, looked astonished and not too pleased. He took me into the bare living room, with its few chairs and tables, of their little flat on the ground floor in the Indian quarters of the town. Quite evidently it was not a home, but a make-shift. The husband disappeared to call his wife, then came back and made a jovial attempt at entertaining me. He spoke mostly of his moving-picture plans. Their bigness contrasted cuttingly with the meanness of these surroundings.

It was fully fifteen minutes until, with great hesitation and reluctance, the little wife came into the room. I caught my breath with pity: she was so pallid and worn and, as the first glance told me, in an advanced state of pregnancy. When we were left alone I took her hands in mine and talked to her affectionately; but she withdrew into her shell, proud and hurt, with a brave show of contentment with her lot and love for her husband. When I told her of the money, she said with a quiet voice but tears trembling behind her lids: "I shall never use it; I shall never leave my husband; he needs me more than my parents do."

I rose to go with a feeling of deep respect for this slip of a girl, still so childish and yet so brave. His plans never materialized and things went from bad to worse.

Some years later another Hindu friend from my California days asked me to visit with him a newly established agricultural school. It had been in the hands of the government which, finding it unprofitable, had sold it at a low cost to an Indian group to which my friend belonged. This group was interested in reform along all possible lines and believed that under inexpensive Indian management this farm could be made into a useful training station for agriculturalists and could likewise be made to pay. My friend confided to me that back of this there lay hidden another and deeper reason: the wish to create a post for the husband of this Californian girl that would insure her safety, in the hope that it might provide a sound chance for her husband, who had had agricultural

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training. The salary that the group could pay was low—barely more than living expenses. The husband was to devote only half of his time to this new enterprise; he had stipulated that he wanted the other half to mature his own big plans.

We went by train and after a few hours dropped off at a little wayside station. Then we plodded for over a mile through the heat to a group of desolate-looking buildings on a flat, cheerless plain. We found a small number of students, possibly a dozen; then the head of the school, dressed in khaki of Western cut, came forward to greet us with a great show of heartiness. But my first glance revealed that he was enormously nervous and labored under great strain.

His little American wife stood quietly waiting on the veranda before her room, one baby in her arms, another clutching her sari —for she was dressed in a plain white cotton sari, her stockingless feet thrust into cheap sandals. On her forehead she bore the vermilion mark that designates a Hindu wife. There was a quiet, staid dignity about her, a great resignation. Her room had the appearance of the average Hindu woman's room: no closets, no shelves, no ornamentation, just bare white-washed walls, some plain cots with mosquito curtains, a table, some chairs and some wooden clothes-racks over which hung her husband's clothing, her own few poor saris and the children's clothes.

While the men were in conference, I remained talking to her, but I kept our talk purposely all on the surface. I realized there was absolutely nothing to be said or done, nothing could be changed: here were the two kiddies, charming children, clinging to her; there was her husband with this new chance, possibly his last; and here, also, was the little college whose only funds came from a group of disinterested men with an honest desire to help their beloved mother-land and help this Western wife whose suffering they felt to be shaming India. Money to do more than what was being done there was none, and small as the start was, with this fine fertile track of land so near a large town, there was every chance of the experiment turning out well. With every improvement and every bit of success, the living conditions of this family would be the first to benefit.

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At the end of the afternoon we left, I with my heart full of unexpressed pity that was shot through with a strange elation over the proud bravery of this undernourished girl.

My next news of her came again from this same old friend of mine: her husband had not done well with the school. His other great plans, with big money always in sight but never within reach, seemed to have encroached too much; he was no longer the head of the school. The little woman was in the free ward of some hospital, hopelessly dying of consumption. I never saw her again.

In one of the native states I was for a while boarding with an English woman. She told me of a countrywoman of hers who had married a very high Brahmin official, head of one of the state departments. As usual, they had met in England. He was a fine, quiet, cultured man of the type of whom any wife in any country could be proud. But she made the usual mistake that Western wives of Hindu officials fall into. In a country like India, officialdom on its social side narrows down into unbelievable rigidity: gossip, jealousies, fights over precedence, intrigues for promotion occupy the minds far more than any thought of the welfare of the people whom they serve. Their narrow, arrogant attitude does actual harm to British Empire interests on one hand, and on the other keeps them from ever coming to know of or benefiting in the least by whatever India has to offer of value to foreigners.

This English wife of the Brahmin official also resented bitterly that she was slighted by the English section of this native state's officialdom. Instead of resting content with her beautiful home and the fine companionship of her husband and his group of friends, she was determined to assert her right to social recognition among the English as a high official's wife. The many slights and pin pricks that she had to suffer silently had deeply embittered her.

Then she found herself pregnant. To the horror of my English informant, this mother-to-be had expressed actual dread and hatred of the coming child. She did not seem to have realized until then that her child might possibly be dark—and pressed a terrible recoil at that thought. Her pregnancy passed in sheer agony and rebellion.

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Some time later, I came to know this woman personally. Her little girl whose coming she had so dreaded, was then about a year old, a fair and wholly delightful child, and the very apple of her eye. I felt certain from the mother's talk, that, whatever else the future might bring, the child of this Brahmin—who in culture and education and character stood superior to his English wife—could not help but grow up with a prejudice in favor of all things British, if not actively anti-Indian—in favor of a society that spurned her mother.

Another English woman, Mrs. D., had married a Mohammedan of very high position, with a large salary, and who was wealthy in his own right besides. He was finance minister of a native state, so in this case also no economic problem ever played any part. She had two children, a boy and a girl, and then she died. The children were taken by their grandmother in England and were attending English schools. There had been mutual affection and respect between the parents, Mrs. D. being exceptionally fine, well-bred and cultured.

I came to know his second wife quite closely. This Mrs. D. was the sister of the first. She told me that after the death of her sister, he had repeatedly proposed to her, partly because they were great friends, but largely because he pleaded that none but she could make so good a home for the children. Having been married to an English wife, he could not imagine himself married to any other nor giving his children a stepmother who would not be close to what their own mother had been. At last she had consented and the marriage took place, but it was after all decided that the children should be left in England to finish their education. Mrs. D., cultured herself, soon changed the home to suit her tastes: the Indian floor durries were replaced by beautiful Persian rugs, and well-chosen furniture took the place of the old; but the children for whose sake mainly the new home had been established, remained in England until they were fully grown. At last they came out to India. Father and stepmother had hopes and plans for a brilliant marriage for the daughter to some Mohammedan, but no intention whatever of forcing the girl's hand. They had one particularly splendid young man in viewwhom the girl herself met and liked, but due to her Western training

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she recoiled at the faintest suspicion of any pre-arrangement.

Nothing could please her. She felt wholly out of touch with every young Indian. Both brother and sister felt themselves to be utter aliens in India and considered England to be their home. Within a year's time, both returned to England with the definite intention of remaining there for the rest of their lives. The girl went into some sort of business there—gift shop work, if I remember rightly. I don't recall what the boy turned to. But their English stepmother, who really had their best interests at heart, grieved over their decision and over the utter frustration of her husband's plans. She felt that, due to race prejudice, the children would never have the same favorable chances and the same high position in England that they might have attained had they remained in the country of their father. So, with the main reason for her marriage wiped out, she felt her social and intellectual isolation more strongly, and thought seriously of returning to England.

"I have lost my children, are you, too, going to desert me? Then I shall be utterly alone," was all that her husband said. It was enough to keep Mrs. D. in India.

When I returned from France to Calcutta, several other cases, or further developments in old ones, came under my notice again, and served to strengthen my conclusions on the question of interracial marriages.

I found another instance of the denationalization of the children of such a marriage, in meeting two charming adolescent girls, the grandchildren of Sir G. Their mother was an American. They themselves had spent some four years in the States and had every appearance of American flappers, only the dark eyes, raven hair and olive tint of skin were there to make me remember that the father was Hindu. They felt quite out of touch with Indian girls of their own age and with Indian life in general, and the criticism of Hindu society toward their Western clothing and Western manners was far from tolerant. Had they been compelled to look upon India as their future, home, there would certainly have been in tolerable friction and discontent. The one thing that saved them was the possession of money which gave them freedom to move

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about. When last I saw them in Calcutta, they were just on the point of leaving for a sojourn in Switzerland—a sojourn that was for an indefinite period and may very likely turn into a lasting absence from India.

Children placed in a field of conflict between two widely differing forms of society, or forced through circumstances into divided allegiance, are bound to suffer. No half-blood child in India today can escape such suffering. Offspring of inter-racial marriages are probably best off when they have around them, from the earliest years on, an undivided influence. In cases where the mother is white, this is possible only outside India, in countries such as France, where race-prejudice is low. I know of but one such case directly, but casually. In Calcutta, at a tea in a Mohammedan friend's house, I met an employee of the High Court. He was an older, pleasant man, all in a warm glow over sailing for France on the following day. I learned that this had been an annual event for close to thirty years. He had brought back with him a French wife after his student days, who, following her first winter in India, had fled back to France vowing she never would return. They had four children; the sons were all in the French army. I was told these felt themselves to be wholly French, and were subjected to no racial discrimination whatever. The husband divided his time between France and Calcutta, earning a living in the latter and spending his time in France as a holiday. He seemed quite content with the arrangement.

I came across only one instance where the children seemed to me to be growing towards a wholesome attitude. Through Lady Bose, I had met the English wife of a Hindu High Court judge and her delightful children. Her daughter was about seventeen years old. The two of us had gone for some long walks in Darjeeling. The mother I remember was dressed in faultless tailored English clothes, but the young daughter in exquisite saris. She, too, had been educated in England and while there had worn English clothes; but back in India both she and her English mother preferred that she should wear the beautiful garments of her father's people. This seemed to me as it should be: on both sides culture and education enough to be fully appreciative of both English and Hindu civilization, and all of the members of this high household

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sure enough of themselves and of their position to be quietly proud of both civilizations and their outward symbols. There is no doubt in my mind that Hindu subjugation and the presence of foreign rulers of a different race have made the question of inter-racial marriages far more intricate and difficult; it creates superiority and inferiority complexes that discolor and distort all relationships, those of an intimate nature possibly more than all others. If it were not for this distortion, the foreign wife would be more ready to seek for and appreciate the good and fine traits of Hindu life and character and would be less sensitive to the criticism of other whites. Hindu husbands, on the other hand, would not exhibit that resentfulness of criticism which they now so often mistakenly ascribe to a feeling of race superiority on the part of their wives.

One aspect of inter-racial marriage, not connected with children, came under my notice in the case of a cultured Russian girl. When her Hindu husband's family heard of his plan of marrying her, they feared they would get no share of his income, and threatened to poison her should the marriage take place. Marry the two did, but to this day she does not dare let his relatives come too near. Without children, socially isolated, with fine scientific training for which she finds no scope, she feels incredibly isolated.

During my absence I had failed to write to her frequently. She complained in her letter: "There are so many things I should like to talk over, but there is nobody, nobody to talk to. It is the most lonely life you can imagine. . . . No change is possible here. You know people and conditions, so I need not go into details. What I need is work, all-absorbing work—but where to find it?"

Another difficulty that meets Western girls in intimate home life arises out of purdah conditions, from which springs the bitter jealousy with which Indian women are likely to view her free and interesting conversation with men. The majority of Indian women are excluded by habit and training from such contact. This leads to much criticism and heartache, and goes far to bolster up the almost universal Indian misunderstanding as to the character of Western women.

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How much it is misunderstood is shown with startling clearness in the following incident. A young Brahmin dentist who had spent ten years in Boston told me of a bitter discussion he had with a friend of his who has no personal knowledge of the West. That friend expressed the belief that the West was incredibly immoral and that there was no such thing as a chaste white woman. He based his observations largely on the fact, shocking to him, of seeing white women in indiscriminate society with men, in witnessing their disgraceful modern dances in the dancehalls of the hill stations, and in watching American films with their sensational sex-content, the very worst of which are sure to be shown even in small towns. Then the retaliating answers to an American book accusing India had served to acquaint him with the darkest side of American life. He quoted Judge Lindsey as incontrovertible proof of typical American licentiousness and sex-degeneracy.

The young Brahmin dentist had attempted to explain to his friend the difference of Western manners and outlook on such matters as sex and social intercourse. But his efforts met with such stubborn prejudice and condemnation that at last he lost patience. He then changed his tactics:

"Very well, even if we take it for granted that the West is more immoral than we are, that white women are unchaste to a degree inconceivable in the women of India, that emphasis on the physical virtue of woman is more important than the development of all the rest of her latent capabilities—how then, please explain to me, how does it come about that they are so far ahead of us in most things that make life worth while?"

My young Brahmin friend had not yet made his peace with the restraint of Indian customs and the meagerness of its social life, though he was back in India for over a year.

I realized there was much to be said on the side of the Indian husband, too. Where education is still the privilege of a very few, and where the work and loyalty of each educated man is so essential a need for the advancement and liberating of a great country, it is quite natural that there should be resentment against the foreign woman who takes a valuable man away from his social unit. For most Indian men married

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to Western women are never again wholly at one with their own people, and the children further tend to widen the cleft.

There is still another aspect. An Indian married to a white woman finds himself hampered in opportunities. He does not get the wholehearted support from established men of his own community that he would receive were they looking upon him as still wholly one of themselves, with the additional advantage of his remaining a desirable possible son-in-law for someone among the men of power and position. Returning students, if they are economically dependent on their work, very soon find this lack of support a very serious hindrance when they try to establish a home and obtain a safe income for their foreign wives. One young Hindu doctor just returned from America and in love with an American girl, asked my advice. I urged upon him, as the only fair thing on his part towards the girl, to insist that she come first to India, remain until thoroughly acquainted with conditions, before he marry her. He did not relish the advice, and countered with the accusation that I had turned into a prejudiced reactionary.

One American girl in love with another Hindu wrote to me with the request for advice. I made the same suggestion to her. As I can see it, nothing whatever, physically or psychically, stands in the way of marriage between Aryan Hindus and whites except the fact that the times are not ready. The total discard of the veil, Indian independence, greater international knowledge must come first to prepare favorable soil and bring the right conditions nearer.

Until then, a Western girl who elects to marry an Indian with the intention of living with him in India in reality must be prepared not only to be married to the man of her choice, but must be equally prepared for the greatest possible adaptation to the life of a country with the most complex array of warring social problems in the world.

The more I thought of all these marriages, the nearer I came to believe that none but the supremely great, or supremely favored, or supremely dull could hope to succeed in this present age— and wondered under which category I would ultimately be listed, if I succeeded at all as I still hoped to do.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

A whole year had passed now since I had seen my husband on my return from France the previous October. I had long letters from him about his starting the plantation in the midst of the jungle, wails of woe over the insurmountable slowness of it all. He was sure, however, that somehow he would manage to take me to the plantation at the beginning of this cool season, so I had cut short my marvelous trip to the Ajanta Caves to hurry to Calcutta.

While waiting for him to come to fetch me, I met the poet Tagore again. He was giving one of his theatrical productions in Calcutta. These plays are of great local significance, this particular one even more so than the others. In this play Tagore made a special effort to raise the ancient great arts of the drama, of music and dancing, so degraded at present that they have become almost the monopoly of prostitutes. But in this play his pupils and members of his own family, unquestionably of highest social standing, were to sing and dance before the public.

The theme was that of a dancing girl at a Hindu court. Gripped by the great pure teaching of Buddha, she determines to renounce her former life. But on the anniversary of her great teacher she is once more ordered to dance; to refuse means death. So she starts, but can not go on in the accustomed manner. Under the light of her new vision, the dance becomes one of renunciation, purification, and inner triumph, of avowal of faith. Little by little, during the dance, she divests herself of all the rich jewels and silks of her profession, and stands at last revealed in the simple garb of a Buddhist nun which she has long secretly worn.

The drama ends with her joyful death as a religious martyr. Tagore himself, superbly beautiful in the role of an ancient sage, brings to her departing spirit the final benediction.

The daughter of the great painter Nanda Lal Bose took the part of the dancing girl. She went for her inspiration directly to a study of the great Buddhistic frescoes of Ajanta.

Thousands thronged the performances in the improvised cloth-roofed

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theater, the balconies of which were formed by the three-sided verandas surrounding the court of one of the three great Tagore houses that cluster in their forlorn ancient grandeur and dignity in one of the most dismal sections of Calcutta. Nanda Lal Bose himself had arranged the stage setting: Asoka-railings rich carpets, smoky blue background in the dark depths of which glimmered a tiny lamp of worship in front of a Buddhistic monument. In the marvelous richness of the costuming, too, Nandalal had had a hand.

I sat through the whole performance spellbound. The music as well as the text was Tagore's own creation. Not only was I aware of its tremendous social significance, but the tender tunes, the soft melodiousness of Bengali speech, the grace and enthusiasm, the color and costumes of the performers, the rhythm of the dances formed such a perfect artistic whole that it was overpowering; I found myself sitting there with tears streaming down my face.

This is the India I have been hungering for, this is the heart of her, these are the blossoms of her culture, I sang inwardly. Once more I felt that where such powerful regenerative forces were at work within any country, the hand of outsiders might well be stayed.

But while I was feeling more and more at home in cultural India, my own personal problems did not straighten out. The middle of December was already upon us, and still my husband had not completed arrangements. I was growing impatient; the cool season was slipping by. What on earth was Sarang doing? I knew he had started from the plantation for Dhenkanal three weeks before; why the new delay? Then came a telegram: "DOWN WITH FEVER COMING SOON".

I was again with Lady Bose, but had not expected to remain so long. My room was needed for the visit of Diana Watts. At this point I picked up and left Calcutta for Cuttack, instead of waiting for Sarang to come and fetch me.

Still weak from fever, Sarang met me there. He had changed much; the stamp of physical strain and open-air life was upon him. Face, hands, and knees were burned dark. This is where I most strongly realized the darkening effects of the tropic sun. There was as much difference in

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pigmentation between the covered and uncovered parts of his body as there had been between his coloration and that of his American friends in the old California days.

Sarang was disappointed that I had not waited at Calcutta, for he had to go there to make some purchases. He was hungry for a bit of town life and would have preferred to enjoy it with me. But dreading the double expense, I remained at Cuttack while he took his dip into civilization alone. Contrary to his idea, I believed he would get more out of his contacts with his old cronies if I were not present, and I wanted him to have the most refreshing time possible.

To Sarang, coming from his jungle isolation, it would be intoxicating to have a chance of hearing the endless discussions that bubble up wherever Bengalis meet. They are enthusiastic and marvelous talkers. I, on the other hand, coming back to large towns from my pilgrimages to the shrines of ancient beauty, which most of the educated Indians themselves had never even visited and could not discuss, was likely to feel myself somewhat out of touch with current thought. I grew averse to the increasingly bitter political discussions and race antagonisms. I was drawing nearer and nearer to things of universal interest, to ground upon which the seekers after beauty and knowledge of every nation and every race can meet.

Yet nowhere in India was it possible to come into contact with any group of people without hearing, at some point or other, the discussion swing upon national, and therefore political, matters. It would take less than the fingers of one hand for me to count the Indians I had talked to up and down the length and breadth of India, who disinterestedly professed loyalty to Great Britain, and there was not one who did not look forward to ultimate Indian independence. I had been amazed to find that mere expediency or selfish advantage alone led anyone ever to say a good word in favor of the continuance of British rule. I cannot believe that the British or the outside world realize to what extent Indians are disaffected. Probably no Westerner can, unless such a one has lived for many years intimately among them. One and all they resent being discriminated against, being forced into secondary positions in their own

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country, being dictated to with display of white race-superiority, and being exploited. Of this last factor, Indians are generally convinced, and their patience is fraying, flayed as it is by political agitation. One of my friends pointed out to me that even Sir William Joynson-Hicks had said in a speech:

"We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know it is said in missionary meetings that we conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India as the outlet for the goods of Great Britain. We conquered India by the sword and by the sword we should hold it. ... I am not such a hypocrite as to say we hold India for the Indians. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods. . . ." My friends went on to say:

"We resent the hypocrisy that leads England to pose before the world as India's disinterested peace-keeper. Had more Englishmen, or the government itself, come forward with that frank avowal as expressed by Joynson-Hicks, and based negotiations on the frank understanding of mutually profitable agreements, then we should not now feel such relentless distrust and opposition to British cooperation in the development of the country.

"As to the claim put forward in England and elsewhere that internecine strife would devastate India if the British withdrew now, and that we are not yet fit for self-government, our answer is: We cannot commit greater mistakes or crimes than the whites have made—and we have more right to make mistakes among ourselves in our own country than the outsider has to inflict his on us.

"When the white man, claiming superiority, can coolly shoot down without warning, as at Amritsar, eight hundred unarmed brown men, women and children, it ill becomes him to declaim against the future conflict between brown and brown. And when he points to this future conflict as his ethically compulsory reason for retaining his hold on India, we can only smile, and remember the great peace whites have been so successful in keeping among themselves in Europe during the last hundred years."

However, by now I had grown convinced that there are deeper

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regenerative forces at work in liberating India both from herself, and from the outside, than those that express themselves in ordinary political ways. I had sensed this even before leaving California, but my experiences of recent years had deepened this intuition to certainty: the fate of India depends on its own deep inner growth, and no power either from within or without can hold her down beyond her hour of readiness.

With this growth Gandhi, the spiritual teacher, is connected to an amazing and ever-increasing degree. Living in close touch with Indian women, with village life, with all classes, I began to glimpse in true perspective the incredible influence of Mahatmaji. As the spirit of Buddha swept over all India in a purifying wave two thousand years ago, so is the spirit of Gandhi sweeping through the masses like a strong religious revival. He touches and awakens the Indian heart in its oldest and deepest vibrations, in emotion and in its hunger for spiritual perfection.

Away from cities, away from political platforms, deep into village and jungle his messages have gone, already almost assuming the halo of divinity. These messages are not primarily political; they are ethical and spiritual. For truth Gandhi would sacrifice even India herself if need be. The burden of his cry is fundamental individual regeneration, dedication to truth and purity. Attain inner freedom and purity, and outer chains will fall! As you free yourself, all else must equally stand free beside you; away with the seclusion of women, away with untouchability of segregated classes, away with social vice such as drink, away with religious intoleration!

Like a sea these ideas have swept over India, rushing here like a torrent, swirling there in eddies, slipping through now in a thin stream, or settling quietly in deep pools. Persons, classes, and localities react to these messages in part, according to need and vision. Probably no one is adopting Gandhi's ideas in their entirety.

There were times when I had felt impatient over this half-heart-edness in professed followers. In my first year in India, during a discussion with one of his most influential followers, I drove that man into a corner with the final admittance, that no, he simply *could* not bring himself to eat with an untouchable, though in all else he was ready to follow Gandhi.

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"But you eat with Gandhi?"

"I am honored to do so."

"Yet you know that he has adopted an untouchable child as daughter and eats with her!"

A shrug of the shoulder was my only answer; and I felt superiorly scornful. But the years had softened my critical Western attitude. India has a right to her own slow way of moving, and among the folds of this slowness there lies so much hidden beauty of which the West knows nothing.

In the most unexpected out-of-the-way places in India Gandhi's influence has been revealed to me.

The bullock cart driver, simple villager, who jolted me back and forth from the Nizam's Guesthouse to the marvelous rockcut monastery of Ajanta with its wealth of frescoed story, started singing a Gandhi song. I questioned him: no, he knew nothing of politics, had no conception of what the vote meant, nor what nor where the foreign *raj* was. Then what did he know of Gandhi? Gandhi was the Great Soul who taught that he must spin in his idle time so that his children should be clothed, that drink was sin, that he must live cleanly and love everybody *because the Great Mother commands!*

Once, discreetly, I questioned my Mohammedan butler—oh, yes, Mahatmaji taught that Mussulman must not hate Hindu; all are brothers!

This year Gandhi was touring flood- and famine-stricken Orissa. As luck would have it, he was due in Cuttack just while I was waiting for my husband to return from his short visit to Calcutta, and looking forward to have him take me for the first time to his birthtown and our plantation. I knew four out of the seven men of the Local Congress Board of Cuttack very well, and induced one of these to take me to the meeting where they discussed plans concerning lecture arrangements, financing, reception, and entertainment of Gandhi.

It interested me to get a glimpse behind the scenes and to find out just what Gandhi's touring involved, but my main purpose was to find an occasion to sketch Gandhiji. These men were without any understanding or appreciation of art. To each and all a photograph

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would have been as satisfying as the best painting, and far preferable as it cost distinctly less. But all were very friendly and quite willing to help.

The committee met at the house Gandhiji was to occupy. My diary reads:

Cuttack, Orissa, December 16, 1927.

On the veranda floor a striped woven *durree*, a long desk only a foot in height, and around it, their faces lit by a dim lantern, sit, cross-legged, the men of the committee.

I, too, sit on the floor.

Yes, everything will be ready for Mahatmaji in time. Walls have been whitewashed, rubbish removed in house and garden. Odds and ends have been bought; fifty rupees worth of fruits and vegetables have been ordered from Calcutta, a night's journey distant. I am amazed. Gandhiji's needs are said to be so simple! Gandhiji would be traveling, they expected, with a party of about six people. They plan that Mirabai [Miss Slade, daughter of an English Rear Admiral, and now *chela*, i. e., disciple of Gandhiji] shall have a room to herself.

One of the men, a lawyer, suggests that I be one of the reception committee to meet Gandhiji at the train. I demur, and the matter is dropped.

When Gandhiji reaches Cuttack Station at 2:30 silence is to greet him. For at one o'clock sharp on that day he will have started his weekly day of strictest silence. Those around him will speak to the reception committee, but Gandhi himself is not to be addressed and will not answer, we are told. A unique reception! Where else, outside of India, could one imagine such a greeting? It is agreed that I am to come to this house before Gandhi arrives and that I am to try to arrange directly with Miss Slade for a sitting.

But how? Gandhi will not "pose"; he has neither time nor desire for such things. I remember his views as expressed by an interviewer: "I personally have no need of arts like painting. For I myself find enough satisfaction in the view of the starry vault. Perhaps Europe needs painting to satisfy her because she has no starry sky to enjoy most part of the year, as you must be knowing. I do not want to decorate my ashram

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with paintings. ... I do not particularly care for paintings, nor would I go out of my way to ask others to get them to decorate their walls with. I myself do not like to adorn the walls of my ashram because I want always to get outside them—the walls seem to confine me, to restrict my liberty, to keep me away from nature." In another part he was quoted as saying: "If you go to my Satyagraha Ashram, you will find the walls bare. And my friends object to this. I admit I don't have paintings on the walls . . . that is because I think that the walls are meant for sheltering us, and not because I am opposed to art as such. For have I not gazed and gazed at the wonderful vault of the starry sky—hardly ever tiring of the same? And I do say that I can never conceive of any painting superior to the star-studded sky in its satisfying effect on the mind. It has bewildered me, mystified me—sent me into the most wonderful ecstatic thrills imaginable. Side by side with this wondrous mystery of God's artistic handiwork, does not that of man appear to be the merest tinsel?"

Knowing these not very encouraging views of Mahatmaji's, I feel none too sure, but am determined somehow to win out. Yet even if I am permitted to try, shall I be able to catch a likeness of Gandhiji, a saint, while he talks to his own soul, and argues and pleads with Young India silently, through his pen, in his inimitable, direct, naive, yet keen fashion?

December 18th.

At two this afternoon, tired of waiting for servant and *gharri*, which failed to show up, I picked up my sketching things and walked through the deep red dust and warm December sun towards the house which Mahatmaji is to occupy. I had visited it but once before in the dark. A narrow lane leading off the main road, eager youths dressed in khaddar and wearing bright-colored khaddar-stars on their breasts, were passing me on bicycles, on foot; no need to ask my way. Near the entrance to a house a crowd is waiting and khaddar-volunteers stand at the gate to keep it out. I enter, followed by questioning glances—a white woman coming to see Gandhiji? And a Memsahib carrying things with her own

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hands! Two oddities rolled into one!

On the veranda lounge several youths, volunteers. I am immediately taken indoors. Gandhi's host comes towards me and takes me to the living room, a room furnished in bad imitation European style.

"C. R. Das's sister is here; would you like to see her? She has come to serve Gandhiji." [C. R. Das was the great Bengali Swarajist leader who steered the Nationalist ship after Gandhi, aghast at the threatened general bloodshed, dropped the helm in 1922.]

Delighted, I at once follow the host into the inner court. But in this zenana court, usually sacred to women and servants only, there sits but one woman, come all the way from Calcutta, a night's journey away; the host's own womenfolk had completely vacated both house and garden, and not a single local woman was present. Urmilla-devi was surrounded by half a dozen eager and willing, but helpless, men, doing her bidding, fetching and carrying. A Brahmin cook, dressed only in loincloth and sacred thread, slips in and out of the kitchen.

Urmilla-devi sat on a palm-leaf mat, a middle-aged lady in widow's garments, preparing vegetables with the *bonti*, a curved knife fastened into a flat piece of wood, which she held down with her bare toes. I, too, squat and we begin to chat. She arrived that morning at five from Calcutta and put up with friends.

"I came here to meet and serve him. Other religious devotees go to Puri, to Benares, to Nasik or Rameswaram. Somewhere, at least once a year, I go to meet Mahatmaji; that is *my* annual pilgrimage!"

I took out my pocketknife and started peeling potatoes which she then sliced as thin as paper on her curved knife. Try as I would, the East won over the West in speed! I laughed and told her how in my Western cocksureness I had "elevated" table-high my kitchen upon first arriving in India, only to realize slowly how all my clever Western inventions could not come up in efficiency to the simple old Indian household tools, and merely served to make my servants unhappy. We laughed.

Urmilla-devi had very much wanted to go and meet Mahatmaji at the train; on her way she stopped here to have a fleeting look at the house where he would put up.

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"I found everything disorganized, nothing ready. These men [with a commiserating glance at the domestically ineffectual men around] had not even thought of ordering a fire ready' for baths and absolutely nothing was done towards preparation d food."

"It is a disgrace that not a single local woman has come forward to manage things," I exclaimed. "You, from Calcutta, can have no conception of the idiotic rigidity of purdah here!"

"The trouble is," Urmilla-devi said, "that Gandhiji and his party left Balasore at nine this morning, and they will certainly have taken no food before starting. So what could I do? Of course I sat right down to work, as you see, instead of going to the station.

Urmilla-devi questioned me about local conditions and about myself. I told her of my special desire to make a sketch of Gandhi.

"Oh, I wish you could! No one has yet made a good one, and the country is flooded with bad pictures of him."

The host was standing near. He objected: "Gandhi will be in his silence—how can one approach him?"

"Oh, that's all right!" Urmilla rejoined. "One *can* talk to him; he doesn't mind. Only *he* never speaks. He's wonderful, never breaks his silence under any condition whatever. He even laughs silently!"

We've finished. Little mountains of prepared vegetables are being carried off to the kitchen. I laugh. "It looks to me sufficient to feed a regiment, yet I am told Gandhiji is so simple!"

"He is! And so is Mirabai! Almost another Mahatmaji! They both live on milk and fruits. But the volunteers need food; there are always so many surrounding him, so many hangers-on."

Urmilla-devi and I get up and stroll towards the living room prepared for Gandhi. The veranda has jet-black pillars of suspicious coal tar freshness. The upper part is painted a rich ochre, the ceiling and inner portions a dazzling white. I laughingly point it out to her.

"Do you see what an earthquake has swept this house? All is new paint and fresh and clean. Ordinarily, people don't care what their houses; look like, don't notice spotted walls, heaped rubbish, cluttered and

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flowerless yards. That is one of my deep regrets. I have talked myself blue in the face, but it does no good. It needs a Mahatmaji's visit to make them see it. And even then it is only for a day! And you should see how the men were digging up, buying and borrowing khaddar-clothes to wear merely for this occasion. Many who ordinarily never wear it. They think they are honoring Mahatmaji. I cannot but feel that a man like him would rather see sincerity and genuine effort in their hearts than this show of a day."

"I can assure you, Gandhiji would far rather they did not wear khaddar at all!" Urmilla-devi said eagerly.

I remembered reading of the remark of a political leader, laughingly quoted by Gandhiji himself: "I like nothing better," that man told Gandhiji, "than to go clad in khaddar to the Councils or social gatherings to spite the Englishmen, and then to come to you clad in mill-made cloth to spite you!" Far preferable to the attitude of many local people!

The living room for Gandhiji has been prepared Indian style: nothing but thick carpets on the floor, and some round hard bolsters on a clean white sheet in the center. The host steps up and anxiously turns towards Urmilla-devi. He points to the floor.

The pillows are all khaddar, the sheet is khaddar, and so is the first rug. "But this lowest rug is foreign!"

"Gandhiji does not care!" Urmilla-devi exclaims. "He wants no show or extra trouble." The host, relieved, turns away. A single chair is in the room, no doubt for "emergency"! Urmilla-devi turns towards me.

"You'd better come and sit in this chair. We'll wait for him here."

Instead I slip off my shoes and sit on the floor beside her. We keep on chatting. She knows so much about Gandhiji. In the short time I've known her she has become far more than merely the sister of C. R. Das; she is a sincere, charming and very capable woman whom I would like to have as a friend.

There is the sound of a motor. We reach the veranda just in time to see Gandhiji mount the steps. A rather short and slim, bony man.

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He wears a white khaddar loincloth that leaves his skinny legs bare; another cloth is thrown over his shoulder, together with a woolen wrap. In his own hand he carries a black box.

Gandhiji is ugly. A shaven but bristly scalp with a wispy topknot, a protruding red-blue underlip, big gaps where teeth are missing, large ears standing out almost at right angles. But I see his smile and think him beautiful—the kindliest, broadest, sweetest smile! I am aware only of the wave of loving respect going out to him from the surrounding crowd, and of a radiance and immense kindliness flooding from him.

The veranda and the garden are full of people who silently press near, bow, and take the dust of his feet.

He looks towards us and recognizes Urmilla-devi. The most winning smile and light in the eyes greet her silently. I am introduced to him. No doubt expecting an English name to grace a white face, he looks a question. My name is repeated to him: "Mrs. Sarangadhar Das." Another charming smile and a kind glance direct into my eyes.

We follow him to the living room. I whisper to Urmilla: "Mirabai is not coming?"

"She follows in the second motor."

Everybody has been eager, but silent, with a subdued shining enthusiasm. Dozens of hands stretch out to carry the luggage to the room, hands which on other occasions would have let a peon carry even a light attachee case!

In the living room Mahatmaji at once sits down on the floor, Urmilla-devi next to him. She has motioned me to sit by her side.

Without hesitation she breaks the silence and talks to him freely and eagerly, giving him news of his Calcutta friends and their doings. Gandhiji listens and answers with smiles and nods or negative of head.

People come, bend down to touch his feet, remain silently for a few minutes and make way for others. Adoration and reverence and joy is plainly written on the faces of all.

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In less than a minute's time Gandhiji quietly opens the mysterious black box; brass and steel glints out of it. His thin nervous hands dip into this tangle, a pull here and a pull there. Now a wooden lever comes up, again some steel rods unfold. It is a portable *charka* that rises before my eyes. Out of a drawer-section Gandhiji then takes a bobbin and a green khaddar roll. He unfolds it on his lap; it contains soft, fluffy, slender puffs of cotton fibre. In another minute the silence is punctuated by the soft hum of the wheel as he spins his very fine yarn.

No loss of time, and certainly no posing. Most utter naturalness. In this strange house in a strange town, two minutes after arriving from a tiring railway journey, Gandhi is silently at work, carrying out in action his deepest conviction.

No wonder a man with such power of concentration and such single-mindedness can sway multitudes as easily as he turns his wheel whenever he decides to do so! Newness, strangeness, crowds —to him these things don't matter, don't exist. He holds his universe subservient in his hand!

Into the room comes a very tall European woman, dressed in old Indian style, but in Gandhi's plain white khaddar. She wears a *choli*, a sort of blouse that is really merely a breastband, backless and tied behind with strings, leaving a strip of waist bare and giving glimpses of the nude back when the folds of the upper garment move. This latter is a sari, a cloth about six yards long and draped to serve as skirt and shawl in one. No need to ask who it is; it can be no one but Mirabai. In this dress at which her countrywomen would have stared with horror, she carries herself with no self-consciousness and great dignity.

I look again: almost a man's face in its strong lines, accentuated because the hair is shaved close to the head like a widow's or a *sanyasini's*. Heavy-swinging black eyebrows, sharply curved nose, intellectual forehead, a bad skin. She speaks quietly to Gandhi and slips out again. I follow her.

"Miss Slade, I want especially to meet you. The other night the Committee suggested that I address myself to you. I want to make

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a sketch of Gandhi."

"I am afraid that is out of the question," comes the crisp, unhesitating answer. "He never consents. He is opposed to such things, and moreover you know that he is ill and tired. One could not expect him to pose."

"Of course, I would not expect him to pose, I would simply do my best while he sits there."

"No, we must not put any strain upon him. However, later on in the day I will ask him about tomorrow, if I think it possible, and will send you word."

Somehow her English directness, her "you art-cat mayn't look at my king" expression does not please me. So, instead of leaving, I return to the room and sit down again near Urmilla-devi. Watching my opportunity, I whisper to her the ultimatum laid down by Mirabai.

"You wait, don't go!" she says and turns again toward Gandhiji. Shortly after she tells him chattily:

"Mrs. Das wants to make a sketch of you; she is an artist, you know. It would be so nice to have one."

Gandhi looks at us both, smiles and nods. I grasp the opportunity.

"Mahatmaji, I've waited and hoped for years for just this opportunity. Mayn't I?"

Another nod and smile. Like a flash I settle myself on the floor with my back leaning against the sharp edges of a small table upon which I have previously placed my materials. At once I grab these and start a charcoal sketch. After a while Mirabai comes in and with great surprise sees me at work.

"Oh, so you are already at it without waiting! I do hope you asked for permission!"

"Of course I would not sketch without permission," I answer, nettled, and with more emphasis than necessary, though in a subdued voice, and feeling a bit triumphant. Then something about Gandhi's presence makes me at once ashamed of this pettiness. After all, Mirabai no doubt simply does her best to guard Gandhiji from annoyance and

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overstrain.

Two children come in, the host's, no doubt. They touch their forehead to the floor at Gandhi's feet, and then sit silent at my right hand. Round-eyed and open-mouthed, they watch me with keenest eagerness.

Urmilla goes out. One or two more people come and go. A young man sits motionless facing Gandhi, never taking his eyes off him. A great peace fills the atmosphere. The wheel hums uninterruptedly, my charcoal glides with a soft slur over the paper, the children follow it breathlessly.

Gandhi sits utterly self-absorbed. He has shifted his head so that I cannot continue with it. But for all the world I cannot bring myself to break the silence. I content myself by sketching body and wheel. For about twenty minutes there is absolute silence about us. I am too busy to think, but somehow a hush and gladness pervades the room and my soul as I search line for line. This touching, great simplicity!

People come again. Through the window back of me several men are silently watching. Now others crowd to the door and shut out my light. In a hushed voice, so as not to break in upon Gandhiji's meditation, I beg of them to make room. They melt away. Gandhi slowly raises his head and looks at me questioningly, thinking I had addressed him. I negate merely by motion, and we continue our silent work.

The air in the great stone-house is chilly. He draws the woolen shawl over his shoulder.

I've sketched in all but the face. A bundle of mail is brought to Gandhiji. Mirabai comes with still more which she has evidently already gone through for him. She also places some milk and grapes beside him. While he sorts and peruses his mail, she comes and looks over my shoulder.

"I see you are postponing the most difficult and important part!"

"Yes, I'll do the face when Gandhi spins again. He has utterly changed

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his pose," I say rather shortly.

"Well, I am glad you got permission."

I look up into her eyes; they are thoroughly friendly. She continues. "I wish we could get a good sketch of him; none has been made as yet."

I work on. Just this morning I had looked over some Moghul drawings. Are they influencing me? With the fewest possible lines and no shadows I am searching.

Two or three people come in, also Mirabai with a doctor. Gand-hiji, who is very weak and suffering from high blood pressure, lies down flat, while Mr. Desai and Mirabai supply information to the physician. Gandhiji stretches out his arm and his blood pressure is ascertained. A consultation. He is not to exert himself at all, his visit to the nearby Alakashrama is to be abandoned, if he at all desires to give the public speech at Cuttack for which he has mainly come.

We then all leave the room for an hour or two to let Gandhiji bathe and rest.

Urmilla-devi, Mr. Desai, some volunteers and I sit cross-legged on the veranda floor and eat lunch from fresh, shining banana leaves that serve as plates. Later in the afternoon I resume my sketching. Mirabai comes again.

"You *are* getting it!" she exclaims.

How shockingly I love praise and encouragement! Clever or stupid, I expand under it! This time I am especially gratified, for Mirabai knows Gandhiji so intimately, and if she approves, it means being passed by a not lenient judge. And it is not easy to draw when Gandhi so often shifts his pose, moves his head, and when dozens of eyes are on my work, judging nascent line by line. And I want so immensely to succeed, for I consider this the most interesting sketch I have ever attempted.

5P.M.

The room darkens. Gandhij1i has resumed spinning. I have almost finished, too tired to dare touch the face again. My body is aching, my legs especially are stiff and numb, doubled under me while I sat upright on the floor hour after hour.

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People come again. Mirabai studies my sketch.

"You have caught a very good likeness."

Urmilla-devi exclaims: "It's wonderful, wonderful! I want to run away with that sketch at once!"

"You really think so? I am so glad. I think the inspiration flowing from Mahatmaji has helped!"

Through door and window others crowd to look. From the veranda remarks drift in to me, partly in Hindu, partly in English, and they are approving. My heart expands happily. Both more and less from vanity: an immense satisfaction! For it is something to know that these people feel I've truly rendered their adored leader. Of course, I tell myself, they know nothing of art! But do I? Who does? What is art?

For the present it suffices me that I've pleased these people; never mind art-critics in Paris!

I turn to Gandhiji. "May I come tomorrow?"

He nods assent. I ask for a needle and thread and sew my mark for the placing of the charka on the carpet, so no sweeper can efface it until then.

Urmilla-devi makes some remark about my work to Gandhiji. I turn to him:

"I've waited and hoped for this for years, and I want so much to finish it completely." I express my thanks. He smiles half teasingly and takes up a pencil. On the sheet he hands me is scribbled: "What are you going to give *me* then?"

I look at him, puzzled, then at Mirabai, not sure of his meaning. Is it a copy he wants, I wonder? But I keep silent. Mirabai reads the lines and smiles:

"You have your wish of years now; he's given it to you. What will you give in return?"

"Oh, anything, anything," I say eagerly, extravagantly. He meets my eyes with his quizzical, kindly smile, and I feel a foolish child under it. Mirabai says urgently and warningly: "*You* know

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what he wants—spinning!"

This dratted, thoughtlessly insincere extravagance of expression of ours! Promising what I never could nor would live up to! But even if his silence had not prevented him, I know Gandhi is too wise to extract fulfillment of promises foolishly given.

Strangely I feel I've made a good sketch, but dropped below his plane! I feel like modifying, explaining, excusing myself, yet I keep silent. Why break into his great silence with words over my foolish promise?

I make my *pranam*—touch my folded hands to my forehead, bow, and withdraw.

Tomorrow at nine I am to return.

On the veranda a crowd is waiting, wanting to see my sketch. More approval. I am escorted to the motor which brought Gandhiji, and sped off with a volunteer in charge of my other paint things, for the precious charcoal sketch I carry in my own hands to avoid effacing it till I can fix it at home. The last good-by still sounds in my ears:

"It is the best sketch any artist has yet made of him!" Purring like a cat with rich cream, smiling derisively at myself, yet elated and somehow deeply moved, I drive home through the glowing dusk.

My diary notes end here. But that day was not to end with elation. I glimpsed an amusing shadow-side of Gandhi's visit.

After dinner at the house of my friend there is an informal meeting. Consternation: the funds collected will not cover expenses! Apparently each town is expected to meet all expenses of Gandhi's party, including the railway fare to the next stopping place, in this case Madras, over a thousand miles away! Saddest of all is the face of another friend of mine (whip of his political party in the Legislative Assembly—a party not supporting Gandhi). As a *beau geste,* more effective than sincere, he has topped the list of subscribers with a promise of one hundred rupees, to find to his incredible disgust

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that up till now even the richest of Gandhi's own followers has subscribed not more than ten rupees!

A squad of collectors is appointed in haste, who are to scurry the town over the next morning in search of contributions. Even some wives are enlisted; in shuttered carriages they are to go to the houses of acquaintances to gather even coppers, should silver not be forthcoming! And in this town these ardent men-followers of Gandhi, these intellectuals, actually *did* send some women out *collecting money*, though they did not send them out to look after the comfort of Gandhi!

On the following day I went to Gandhiji at about nine in the morning. He was still in his silence, busily writing for his paper, *Young India*, with files, books, papers scattered all about him. But there lies also the wreath of marigolds prepared for his morning worship, and the string of prayer-beads. I sit down silently and make a water-color sketch of him.

After a while, he took refreshments of only milk and fruits. Then he attended to letters, took messages, listened to spoken information—but all his answers were given only in pantomime or written out on slips of paper.

As on the preceding day, a doctor came to take his blood pressure. Two hundred! Consternation! Loud and whispered consultation. *Could* the instrument be right? How long ago since it had last been used? Was it the only instrument in town? (A town of 50,000 inhabitants!) No, Doctors So-and-So might also each have one! Hurriedly, another doctor is called, and later still another came. Sincere worry over Gandhi among his attendants—silent Gandhi himself meeting their anxious eyes with quiet smiles. They plan to call off? the big public meeting (a meeting which was held after all, with Gandhi sitting on a chair on top of a table facing an immense crowd, but someone else speaking for him, as he was too weak to give the address).

After this Gandhi and I were sitting alone again in the very silent room, with nothing but the humming of his wheel and the scratching

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of my sketching-pencil audible. Suddenly there was a very insistent swishing in front of the door. Behold, a high-caste rich Hindu himself, broom in hand, brushing the veranda floor, oh, *so* persistently, with sideways glances, hoping to be noticed. And Gandhi did notice, with the faintest smile—this high-caste blatantly demonstrating himself a faithful disciple! Gandhi who sees, notices and forgives everything—except tampering with principles. I, less forgiving, later related this incident to a friend. "Lip-service and sham-reform!" "Oh, no," my Hindu friend laughingly assured me, "that man is not sweeping today for the first and last time of his life, as you surmise. He is too stingy to keep proper help and will probably be delighted to keep up a reform which brings both credit in Gandhi's eyes and benefit to his purse!"
Even hypocrisy is paying tribute to Gandhi's spiritual injunctions!

Sharp at one o'clock in the afternoon, after a glance at the watch lying near him Gandhi started speaking. This sudden breaking of the long silence which had seemed to spell Gandhi himself— his aloofness and serenity—had a strange, startling effect on me. But with his voice came a new revelation of his very lovable human qualities. One of the first things he did was to dictate a telegram with a gleam of amusement and unconcern. As this was done in the presence of a number of people, I am not violating a confidence in quoting it as near as I can remember. It went to his wife, lovingly mentioned Shanti, his adopted untouchable daughter, gave some messages concerning traveling plans, and concluded with a report about his health: "LATEST READING 160, PREVIOUS READINGS 170 AND 200—TAKE YOUR CHOICE—THREE DOCTORS, THREE INSTRUMENTS, THREE READINGS, DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS. MYSELF AS CHIRPY AS EVER, LOVE."

For the rest of the time my mind was half occupied with sketching and half with the discussions that went on between him and his constant stream of visitors. His even reasonableness, patience, and clearness in these discussions never failed, even when he was being criticized and gratuitous advice was offered to him.

One discussion stands out in my memory. Would Gandhi visit a

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certain temple? As answer he referred to a recent experience (I think in Balasore). He had, as always, pleaded with the orthodox to break down restrictions, arguing that true Hinduism was not exclusive. But he did not visit the local temple. At last a deputation of its priests came, imploring him to do them the honor of blessing the temple by his presence. Would they be willing to have his friends, Mirabai (Miss Slade) and Rev. Andrews accompany him? No, that could never be; were these not foreigners? replied the priests. They are my brother and sister; if they may not enter, then I also will not, was Gandhi's final answer.

At last my sketch was finished. It passed from hand to hand and was then given to Gandhi. He looked at it, shyly, I felt (he never uses a mirror and is absolutely without vanity), and then turned to me. "Why did you put so much clothing on me?"

"Gandhiji, you *had* it on!" I replied. (By then, he had discarded the warm covering that he had worn in the morning.) He looked doubtfully up at Mirabai, who was standing near, and she confirmed my exclamation. I actually believe that he was hardly aware of the fact that he had drawn about him extra covering when he was cold and ill, and that he felt all this accidental drapery as too ornate. But the matter did not interest him enough to discuss it further.

Instead, he turned to me exclusively for a while, really interested in my marriage and in the fact that my husband was experimenting with scientific farming in the wilds of Orissa. He put keen questions concerning this. Then he whimsically referred to my promise to do "anything" for him, and we were soon deep in a discussion about spinning.

Would I spin? He had been told that I had been amusing myself in spare moments between sketching with spindle and ball of cotton. Mr. Desai tried to teach me, a very clumsy pupil.

"No, Gandhiji, because I do not believe in it as a principle."

"But you believe in freedom for India, do you not?"

"Yes, I believe fundamentally in freedom for all races and all countries."

Then, would I not, at least as a symbol, use exclusively khaddar cloth?

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No, even that I could not promise, as *I* had no reason for discriminating against foreign cloth. But I did use a good deal of khaddar, not for political reasons, but because it appealed to my artistic taste and appreciation, with its lovely wood-block decorations in color.

There was a fleeting look of pain and disappointment in Gandhi's eyes; to him homespun has deep economic and spiritual significance, and to have it considered by anyone merely from an artistic point of view must have seemed to him superficial, if not frivolous. Lack of convictions, of courage—that was the trend of his conversation—the deploring of the absence of this spirit in India.

Our discussion ended on a note of sadness; I felt a curious sense of frustration. Intellectually, his economic program did not appeal to me; spiritually, I felt him worlds above me. I felt as if I and the world of material progress were passing him by, as the waves wash around the base of a cliff, and roll on; but the cliff remains there eternally serene, while the waves have their one moment of glinting in the sun, and disappear forever.

That evening after dark, tightly-shuttered carriages rolled into the big compound of Gandhi's resting place; *palanquins* with drawn curtains were carried in by trotting bearers who chanted their rhythmic meaningless tune; figures slipped out of these vehicles, and with bent heads, closely drawn veils, and tinkling of anklets and armlets, glided past the crowd of men in the outer rooms, and disappeared up a staircase to the flat roof. To come out, even veiled like this, to a house where many men were gathered, was indeed a venture and an innovation over which many a heart fluttered uncertainly.

But it was for the sake of a *darshan* of the great Mahatmaji, and to hear his blessed voice that these strictly purdah women of Cuttack braved convention. More than a hundred met on the roof, and bared their faces under the light of the moon while listening intently to the words of the great saint—for most of them the first time that they let a stranger glimpse their features. Such is the power of Mahatmaji; he opens doors that have remained closed for centuries. Like a father,

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scolding, encouraging, advising, he talked to and pleaded with them to throw away old conventions and old restrictions and old apathies, to think and feel and work for a greater home than their narrow secluded one, for the Great Mother, India.

Quite well I knew that after this one night the majority of these women who sat with rapt faces, would timidly and contentedly slip back into the warm shadow and security of strict seclusion; but never again would the new cords touched that night be completely silent. Such is the power of Gandhi's contact.

As we all rose, and I once more bade farewell to Mahatmaji, he reiterated his invitation for me to come to his ashram some day. I thanked him but, probably more keenly attuned through his presence, felt a sharp certainty that this would never be, that my contact with the great soul was ended. But not so with these veiled women on the moon-flooded roof, many of whom I knew, some intimately. A few of them, within the short time of my seven years' acquaintance, had taken steps to break through conventions, which required more courage than most of us Western women are ever called upon to muster against our own society. Whether I remained near or far, my interest and sympathy would always be with them.

This incident once more made me wish that I could make the impatient West understand just what it means for an orthodox Eastern woman to dare to throw away the veil. It is exactly as if one of us Westerners were to go into a house of the red-light district, and proclaim to the whole world "I am one with these women!" The immensity of such a decision!

It is one thing to portray such courage and great sense of oneness and freedom in written word, as Olive Schreiner has done in her marvelous dream of the woman who, with voluntarily stained robes, but supporting her broken sister, ascends to the throne of God; it is quite another thing in everyday life for a slip of a sheltered woman, who has been taught to think that her greatest pride lies in the fact that not even the sun has ever glimpsed her face, and that none but prostitutes ever bare their faces to men other than father, brother, or husband—

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it is quite another thing for such a one to attain the conviction and muster the courage to come out into the open.

And this miracle Gandhiji is accomplishing, not through talking about the rights of women or the joys of freedom and individual choice—these inherently selfish motives would not appeal to an Indian womanhood that has been taught for centuries the beauty of service and sacrifice—but by appealing to a higher, impersonal ideal, the need of their Mother, India.*

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* While this goes to press, August, 1930, a letter from a Cuttack man informs me that several of these Cuttack women have discarded the veil and come out into the open. "I can't tell you how quickly the whole Indian outlook has changed. . . . Let me tell you of Orissa, of which I can speak with authority: A. and B. arc today in the front ranks of the civil resisters not only by their unbounded enthusiasm and fearlessness, but what is much more remarkable, by their wonderful organizing capacity. You should see how powerfully and naturally they are leading the men under them and the hundreds of men and women in the villages. *She* is now the Secretary of the Cuttack District Congress Committee."

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A few days after I sketched Mahatma Gandhi, my husband returned from Calcutta. Now, seven years after my landing in India, I started with him for my first visit to his birthplace and then to the plantation that was to be my future home. I was so stirred by the event that I jotted down notes again in my very much neglected diary.
December 29, 1927.

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The railway station is a full hour's ride away from this town of fifty thousand inhabitants, a town still without electric lights and telephone, without trams, but with two movies. To go to the station one must take a *band-gharri* (without rubber tires) that assures you the full benefit of every bump and all the deep red dust of the bad road. The ponies are skeletons, no worse ones in all India, and often fall down in their traces on the way.

It is essential to allow plenty of time to make the trains. Ours was to leave at 7.45, so we ordered the gharri to come at six. I rose at five to do my last packing. The *dhobie* had failed to return my laundry the day before. I had sent my servant three times, the last time at eleven last night — Rathia was still ironing on the rush order.

Packing? No great trouble, with armies of helpers always on hand. I have counted exactly twenty-four separate pieces of luggage, including some large trunks, two hold-alls with bedding, two crates of Chittagong thoroughbred chickens, one canvas bucket with all sorts of last loose things tucked in, one galvanized iron bucket full of shoes covered merely with a cloth, one open leather bag containing everything from Worcestershire sauce to medicines and perfume. Best to leave this wide open, for when coolies see *"galaas"* they are gentle in handling it.

It is six now, but no gharri has come. At six-thirty the *dhobie* arrives staggering under a huge bundle of laundry; dear old Rathia, the only *dhobie* in all India who has never failed to do perfect work for me,

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and this at a moment's notice if need be; Rathia, to whom I could give the most delicate lace dress or finest colored embroideries without the least hesitation. This last-minute laundry is tucked into our bedding hold-alls.

Rathia, two servants and the gardener lend a hand and I have all twenty-four pieces of luggage carried down to the gate, so that there will be no delay; but, at a quarter to seven, still no gharries! Someone dashes off on a bicycle in one direction, a servant runs in another. Of course there are no livery stables; scattered individuals all over the spreading town own and drive these carriages. Where to get others immediately at this early hour? The train is due to leave in just one hour. We'll never make it. I fume; no other train till next day.

At last two gharries arrive. With much shouting and fussing the things are bundled on top of the carriages, and into them, I protesting all the time against the silly uselessness of it.

"You know very well we'll never in the world make it with these horses! I loathe the thought of the endless jolty ride to the station and back again."

"No, damn it, we'll *not* come back; rather camp right at the station!" And Sarang flings on the last things. I am satisfied; just so I do not have to come back here, unpack, sleep and pack again, I don't care where we stay.

Off at last, my new dog Bulu in terror attempting to jump out, for never before has he ridden in a carriage. A new irritation for my husband, who dislikes dogs. But with a bit of petting and a few words from me Bulu understands and is quiet.

On the way to the station the harness breaks; five minutes' delay while it is being tied together with a string.

Just at eight we reach the station—and there is the train only now pulling in, half an hour late, although its starting point for that day is only an hour's ride away. Before we quite reach the station we organize quickly: big things first to baggage room, smaller ones with coolies into carriage; Sarang will rush off and book the trunks,

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I'll buy the tickets. We jump out like a flash and with a dozen coolies fighting to serve us, the avalanche starts. The man at the ticket office greets me with a broad grin, "Don't worry, Memsahib, pa-lenty of time!" There was, indeed—at least ten minutes more! The swarm of coolies under my window is well satisfied; I gave them fourteen annas.

So off towards my new jungle home!

Our train crosses the gleaming broad sands of my adored Mahanadi, then it jerks on over a dusty plain. Soon jungle begins to close in around the track, virgin jungle through whose heart these iron rails are jabbing. It is already yellowing; rains are long past.

At one station eight men crowd to our windows and salaam my husband with expansive smiles. Towards me they cast furtive veiled glances. They are from Sarang's village, come to sell wood to the railway and are now returning along a jungle path—the railway costs too much.

Hills draw nearer. On one slope, half hidden in trees, there is a temple and large house. I am told it is one of the raja's palaces.

And here is Dhenkanal! We draw into the station. The raja's car has been sent; bullock carts wait also for our baggage. A man from the palace tells us the raja is away hunting, but we are to go at once to his guest house, and not to the government *dak* bungalow. Sarang had sent a wire to the raj-office, announcing the train on which we would arrive, but none to his own family.

But news spreads like wildfire. I am the first and only foreign wife to come to these parts, and the only pure white woman in Dhenkanal. Some relatives already reach the station to greet my husband, and bow to me. We hurry and slip away in the car, up the hill, into the town. Weird sensation to see the streets where Sarang, I realize for the first time vividly, once was just one of the crowd of brown, barefoot, bare-bodied babies, even if he and his did lord it over others.

There is really only one street, intersected by small alleys. The street is amazingly wide, and the houses flanking it are of stone or cement.

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But there are wide gaps, and just a bit back from the road cluster mudhouses. There are a few solidly built houses, unusually good for such a small Indian town. The explanation is forthcoming: For many years the state has been in the Court of Wards, that is, in English hands, and the English resident has seen to the building of these during his period of administration. He has widened the street and passed a law against the building of mud-houses on the main road.

The Guest House on top of a lovely hill was also built then, and fully furnished in European style. It contained very large, immensely high, cool rooms, with exquisite views over the little town below, the plain, the hills here and there fringing the horizon; beautiful green hills shading off into blue in the distances, thickly wooded with impenetrable jungle from base to top. These are the hills which make of Orissa the greatest big-game province of India. I was thrilled with the beauty of the place.

But there is not much time for contemplation just now. Our baggage is brought onto the veranda. The guest-house *khansama* has gone off with the raja's hunting party, as have most of his staff. Nothing is ready, no water in the bathrooms, all dishes locked up, all keys with the K*hansama*. True, we were not expected, and our telegram arrived after the raja had left. After much shouting and parleying the raja's man impressed two boys into service and made them carry water for us from the bottom of the hill. Someone scuttles off to try to arrange for lunch, somehow; another goes off to hunt for a cook, somewhere.

I tie my poor cramped chickens out into the backyard, and an admiring crowd gathers around them—*white* chickens, pure white, and so incredibly large. They had never seen anything like it!

I go into my bedroom, slip off my dress and start unpacking, hot, dusty and tired. But there is no peace. As the car went through the town (no one but the raja owns cars) the news flew to Sarang's brother, and already a squad of servants and children— nephews, nieces, cousins—are invading the rooms, all eager to have the first glimpse of this strange white in-law. I am a bit nonplussed and irritated, for I did

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not expect anyone in my bedroom. But one might as well stem a flood: Hindu society knows no privacy, there is no such thing in the women's quarter as "This is my room," or "May I come in?"' All rooms are open to servants and children at any time. Mine is just now crowded to its capacity. All faces are shining with friendliness and shyness mixed, all eyes round with eagerness, flowers in the hands of most and most of them too hesitant to hand them to me directly.

One tiny girl alone seems without any timidity. There is very much of the spoiled-child-who-has-never-been-denied in her. She comes up to me and does not draw back when I put my arm around her, rather does she nestle against my knee with a pro-prietory nudge. I look questioningly at my husband. It is his only brother's youngest daughter, the shining moon of his winter.

The little face is that of a flower, beautifully oval, finely spaced, incredibly large black eyes, lined with *surma*, a perfectly chiseled mouth, very finely textured gold-brown skin, and exquisite slender fingers, the oval nails and the palms of her hands tinted red, as are the soles of her bare feet and the curling toenails. Her jet black hair, which throws off blue highlights with every motion, is oiled and cunningly dressed with extreme skill: parted in the center, it is drawn forward to form six smooth tiny soft curves over the round forehead, and is coiled in a braid at the back of the head. In her hair is fastened a half-moon faceted-gold ornament from which in turn swings a pendant of gold encrusted with rubies and pearls down over the parting of her hair onto the forehead. The coil at the nape of the neck is encircled with rays of blue-and-white beads, and studded with four exquisite silver-filigree ornaments in the shape of flowers. Between coil and head nestles a fragrant wreath of fresh *champa* flowers, that lovely dream-blossom of creamy petals and golden heart and scent which perfumes the Indian night to swooning. From her ears hang beautifully worked gold pendants; several heavy gold-necklaces lie around the slim throat and over the upper lip hangs a tiny gold-pearl. Only at the wrists and ankles does she wear coarse ornaments, heavy bracelets and anklets of pure silver. It is strange that this extravagant ornamentation actually does

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not give an impression of barbarism, but rather that of extreme care and delicacy, a hothouse orchid, product of a perfected art, leaving me with the feeling of a bit of bronze statuary on which a fine and highly experienced artist-craftsman has expended his most loving, ungrudging care.

"Does she always wear so much jewelry?"

"Not quite, in today's honor the hair is waved, and the ruby and pearl ornament worn. On other days she wears her hair smooth in a pigtail down her back, but all the rest of the ornaments are worn always, and bracelets and anklets never come off."

My little niece-in-law and I speak to each other in smiles only, for I do not know Oriah. She stands by me motionless, her eyes glued to me; apparently I am a weird and huge animal in her life's little zoo. She has the most perfect little teeth—and a cud of *pan* in her cheek! What a shame that this slow discoloration of her teeth into ugly red-black is sure to come in time!

A servant arrived breathless from a quick climb up the steep hill with a note to Sarang. "My brother writes that he wishes me to go down alone first." A twinge of uncertainty and pain shot through me. Almost eight years ago I had seen this brother; he had once come to us when I was at Cuttack. The present touch of sensitiveness was a repetition of the one felt then. He had brought me a big basket of sweets made for me by the women of his own family, but he would neither sleep at our house nor touch any food, not even *pan,* that symbol of extended and accepted hospitality. I was literally an untouchable to the members of my husband's family. Then, as now, I knew perfectly well the reason: firm-rooted caste restrictions. But reason was not strong enough to prevent my very human hurt reactions.

Just then Bajya, Sarang's body-servant, who had gone down to the family house with our first message, came back. He brought with him the explanation for his delay in returning to us. Out of a fresh shining banana leaf he took several wreaths of marigold, champak and jasmine flowers. The women of Sarang's house had begged him to wait while they hurriedly made those ready as a welcome to me.

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The wreaths were interspersed with a rosebud here and there. The jasmines were all buds, hundreds of them that would unfold later in waves of perfume; I knew that it must have taken many eager and willing hands to pick and string these at such short notice. As for the rosebuds, they could have come only from one garden, Sarang's cousin's. He experiments with plants and animals. Roses were very rare, and to bring himself to break those buds, was indeed no small gift.

I felt a keen stab of remorse as these lovely wreaths were hung around my neck. Why should I always be so touchy, so oversensitive? These people, whose hopes and plans for the most promising member of their family I had so utterly smashed, were really meeting me in as generous a way as they possibly could. They went to the very limit of their caste-boundaries to make me welcome. I, on the other hand, had no limitations to overcome; no feelings of caste or religion or race held me back. No doubt this note requesting my husband to go alone first merely meant that they were at a loss and anxiously awaiting his advice as to how to receive me, I could so well realize their incredible perplexity and even timidity—how were they to meet this white in-law, what was the proper thing to do among the few things that they were at all able to do? It was out of the question for his family to let me stay in their own home. Their society would not have permitted it. Not a single member of the family, not even a servant, would be able to touch my dishes, nor could any dish touched by me ever be used again, as it would be considered polluted. They would not even dare eat with me in the same room. Bringing home a foreign wife is no simple matter in a Hindu household.

I knew all this quite well, theoretically, but it was only step by step that I began to realize the full force of all these restrictions which, away from Sarang's own group, had touched us but little. My husband had been storing up difficulties unsuspected even by himself, much less by me, when finally deciding to go back to his home state.

But where was my mental training if I could not tolerate— where I could not overcome—their limitations of caste and ways of living so

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far as these concerned me? Thus I reasoned with myself as my husband started to go to his brother's house. I begged him to take with him all servants and children, as I was really in need of rest. For some hours I was left absolutely alone.

I went and sat on the steps of the big veranda, gazing across at the raja's palace that glimmered in blinding whiteness on the first slopes of the jungle-covered hill beyond. At dead of night, leopards sometimes leapt the palace walls, taking advantage of the steep upper slope, and then were unable to leap out again.

Near the lower gate of the palace garden there nestled the huts of the door-keepers. The children had just told my husband, excitedly, that *a.* few nights ago one *chaprasi* was soundly sleeping on a rope cot on his veranda. Under the bed, equally sound asleep, lay his dog. Suddenly the cot lurched, there was a terrific yelping, and then silence. The chaprasi leaped up just in time to see a leopard making off with his dog.

This tale was very vivid in my mind as I sat on the back veranda of the raja's guest house. The knowledge that I was in one of the wildest parts of India gained a greater immediateness still because, every now and then, I heard a great roaring and trumpeting from the direction of the palace. The elephant stables lay over there somewhere, but the roaring no doubt came from the two full-grown leopards which the raja had lately caught in a trap.

It was the end of December, and the sun enveloped me with a warm soft glow as I sat there in the midst of fresh breezes that blew around this house on the top of a knoll. It was indescribably lovely, this vast untamed, unsung beauty of the jungled crown of hills all about the fertile plain. I understood, all at once, where that subconscious store of love of beauty in my husband's soul had had its origin; why he had always taken such a sympathetic joy in my efforts at painting and given such unfailing encouragement.

As I gazed at that circle of hills and beyond, where, somewhere, our plantation that I had never yet seen lay in its own embrace of jungle,

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I was suddenly sunk into an ineffable sea of joy and pain—a vast sense of loneliness. I felt an intense love for it all, yet it struck me with awe. It was not fear, for danger, uncertainty the raja's palace that glimmered in blinding whiteness on the first slopes of the jungle-covered hill beyond. At dead of night, leopards sometimes leapt the palace walls, taking advantage of the steep upper slope, and then were unable to leap out again.

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have ever drawn me—not fear, but foreboding.

In a rare but sure way, I sensed that somehow all this was mine to behold but not to be a part of. The feelings that swept through me were, strangely enough, those of farewell, not of home-coming.

Unable to bear the insistent calling of the beauty that lay spread before me, and that weird sense of apartness, I went into my room and lay down. My husband found me fast asleep at five o'clock when he came to take me to his brother.

We went in the raja's car to the family home. Before every house and every shop there were clusters of men and children, and through windows and doorways appeared eager, veiled women's eyes. The car stopped at the end of a lane too narrow to let it enter. Some children that were peeping around the corner of the house ran away with excited jabbering to carry the news. Several men came forward to meet us, one of them my husband's brother. He seemed constrained and uncertain in the new situation. According to the rules of his society he should never have been in a position even to behold my face, that of his younger brother's wife. Leaving this aside, as he was my superior in family hierarchy, he need have acknowledged my salutation—joined hands against bowed forehead—merely with a nod. But he apparently decided to establish precedent, and with a friendly smile returned my *pranam*. I was wise enough, of course, not to extend my hand; the thought of touching me would have shocked him. He led the way back through a lane flanked by hedges of dry thorn-branches and by the mud-walls of houses with thatches so low that my outstretched hand could easily touch them.

Over the wall of the compound surrounding the family house a babel of excited voices rose. The moment I stepped over the high sill, a sweet-faced little woman came up to me, dressed in an unadorned white sari and without jewels of any kind. She was intensely excited and made bird-like fluttering movements. Her veil slipping back revealed a shaven head. I knew before my husband could even tell me that this must be his oldest brother's widow, the one

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who had treated him as a son since his return, had cared for him in a hundred little ways and cooked his food with her own hands. Being a widow, living her austere religious life, she was no longer as closely subject to caste restrictions as all others.

With a warm impulse and without reflection, I stretched out my hands toward her smilingly and gripped hers. For one instant she drew back uncertainly, then suddenly her eyes flooded with tears, and she returned a warm pressure. From that moment on she established a curious little right of possession over me, constituting herself my guide through the strange maze of welcoming.

The little courtyard into which I had entered was flanked on two sides by mud-houses and on the third by a wall through which a door led into an inner courtyard. Against this wall on a little pedestal there stood a pot containing the sacred *tulsi* plant. No orthodox home in all India is without; this plant, before which the women of the house perform their daily worship and offer the family's food to the deity for consecration. Behind this plant the yellow mud wall was painted with auspicious signs in whitewash tracings. These were freely and directly drawn, bold and astonishingly graceful: peacocks, fish, and geometrical figures. Knowing Dhenkanal to be devoid of monuments of ancient art, I was delightfully startled to see this old village art still living with such sure freshness.

Stepping up, the little widow gave me a sprig of the *tulsi* plant. I took it gratefully, and then suddenly a lump rose in my throat— this must be the very plant before which my husband's mother had died. Ailing for some time, she had still persisted in the daily rite of worship. One morning, at dawn, she had slowly made her way out to the sacred plant once more, watered it tenderly, made her obeisance, and then suddenly, while murmuring the name of *Hari-Hari,* blood had gushed over her lips and she died on the spot. A great gladness filled me while remembering that her heart's wish had been granted: Sarang had reached her in time to take the dust of her feet and receive her blessings.

In the inner courtyard beside some mud-houses, there stood a

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stone house built by Sarang's brother. A number of people were waiting here, all eager and smiling, all talking to me and then turning to my husband, appealing for translation. I had no means of knowing who they were or what they were saying, for my husband himself was too much taken up to be able to translate more than a fraction. Then I was drawn onto the veranda and into a room. Several women were waiting there. Two of them, especially, were dressed with marked care and abundant jewelry. It took me some time to realize that the older was my brother-in-law's wife, and the younger his seventeen-year-old daughter. Being purdah women, my husband could not come into the room. So there was no one to introduce us in a way that I could understand.

The young girl was very fair and very mature, yet did not have the vermilion mark of wifehood on her forehead; for among my husband's caste child marriage was a thing unknown. Most girls married between sixteen and twenty-two. The reason for this was not far to seek: Dhenkanal is a jungle town in a secluded state; Mohammedan rule had never penetrated there. Consequently, Hindu women had never been threatened, and fathers were never compelled to marry them early or betroth them as children to insure their safety.

These women greeted me with smiles and little gestures with much fluttering of veils and shy embarrassed giggles, but touch me, they did not. The youngest child, that bright little imp who had captured me that afternoon, crowded up to me, however, and kept hold of my hand. Children are almost free from caste restrictions.

After some time, my brother-in-law came in and said something that I could not understand. Some of the women hurried away into inner rooms, while others withdrew into corners, pulling the *saris* across their faces. Then in came my husband and a fat, cheerful, middle-aged man with the voice of one used to being considered and obeyed. Thank heaven, at last someone who spoke English! It was Sarang's cousin, son of the former prime minister. He sat down on a mat and urged me to take a seat beside him, as did my husband. Immediately the

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door leading to the veranda was crowded with eager spectators, almost shutting off all light. The people in the room, too, showed repressed excitement. The air was astir and aflutter with high-pitched snatches of comment. I could well understand it all—these were unheard-of doings: men sitting in friendly talk with a woman, a woman with unveiled face. More and more strange, a servant came from this cousin's house bearing a tea-pot and some cups and saucers. The tea was already sugared and contained a superabundance of milk. Three cups were filled and placed; on the floor beside us. Then the servant who had taken very great care not to come too near me, withdrew and we started sipping the tea, dark as coffee, whose leaves had no doubt been boiled for ten minutes or more.

I drank it with great appreciation mixed with silent amusement. Great indeed was the honor that was being shown me. The family's deep regret and shame over not being able to offer me food in their house, had been expressed to me. In further attenuation the cousin had struck upon the brilliant idea of having tea brought from his house in his own dishes and to honor me in addition by sitting down and sipping it with me.

It was this friendly expression that I appreciated deeply, but my chuckling was over the incongruity and unreasonableness of it all; for here was the cousin, member of the same caste, breaking the society's taboos by drinking tea with me out of his own dishes, yet he would not be outcasted. His caste people knew that he had been guilty of many such infringements on his trips to larger towns; still, no outcasting. Why not? For the very simple reason that he was a man of more wealth and power and character than the rest. They did not dare touch him. He would be able to give weight to counter-accusations: few were the men who had not eagerly sinned against caste on occasional trips away from Dhenkanal! Moreover, in the attitude of these many people watching us drink our tea I felt not only no condemnation, but actually a sort of grateful relief that someone among them stood high enough to have the courage to show tangibly friendliness towards me: the golden-collared black sheep

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of the family expressing their white deed!

Afterward I was motioned onto the veranda again where the little widow once more took my hand. With my husband following and a bevy of children dancing about, I was pulled into the outer courtyard, across the little lane, and into another much larger courtyard beyond. Everywhere, I had to duck to slip through the low gateways. In this courtyard there was much quacking and squawking; beautiful white ducks and geese and fine chickens were strutting about. This must be the experimenting cousin's house. I lifted my eyes; a large, dark, unadorned structure rose before me. Indeed, this was the house the building of which had so impressed my husband in his childhood. Seeing it again for the first time after thirteen years' absence, he had been amazed to find that any ordinary middle-class house in California seemed preferable to this mansion of his childhood memories, this prime minister's abode.

Following the tugging at my hand, I entered a huge, dark, bare entrance hall, not knowing what to expect nor what was expected, for in the babble of conversation going on all about, no one had thought of informing me. Near a stairway at the end of the hall a little shriveled woman came to me. She was toothless and bent, yet even so there was a quiet dignity about her. I smiled and made my *pranam*, not knowing whether I should stay or go; but luckily another tug at my hand decided this for me and up I went over dark stairways and into hallways, the widow still leading me and my husband still following. In that upper hallway I heard a hum of voices from an inner room. The curtain of the door moved and out came a very pretty woman, more than usually self-assured and smiling. My husband had held back out of sight, but as he heard her voice he called out something in a teasing tone and started forward. There were sharp exclamations and giggles and veils flashed across faces. My husband came a few steps nearer, but with a laugh this woman quickly retreated. "All right, go on, she will look after you," he called to me, and I heard him go down the stairs.

By this teasing I knew who she was: the wife of his cousin. My

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husband was in the habit of joking with her and had every now and then laughingly transgressed the purdah rules. In fact, there were not very many caste or purdah rules that he had not given a sound shaking to during the various trips to his home. Partly in answer to his good humor, partly making allowance for his absence in foreign lands, most of the family took this in good part. We had a suspicion that if the truth were known, the women found a stirring excitement and shy pleasure in this breaking of rules for which they did not have to carry the blame.

I was then ushered into that inner room and caught my breath. It, the little secluded veranda, and the adjoining room, were full of women of every age, all of them talking at the top of their voices, giggling excitedly and pushing each other out of the way in order to get a good view of this amazingly strange white in-law. I realized that the whole blessed relationship and caste members must have gathered here for a good look at me. Silks, gold embroidery, jewels, perfume, red-painted palms, *surma-blackened* eyes, and fluttering veils—the air fairly glittered around me.

No wonder my husband had been asked to come first alone, even if for no other reason than to give hours of time to this bevy of women to dress up so gorgeously and carefully. What a contrast, even outwardly, between the two societies that had nurtured me and my husband: In my democratic home stress was laid on comfortable, substantial houses, while personal adornment was deprecated; his aristocratic social group was content to live in cramped, ugly homes, but was lavish in personal adornment. Even on this gala day I was dressed very simply in one of my ordinary washable frocks and, as usual, without ornaments of any kind. Every inch of me was being scrutinized and discussed by these women. With little motions they conveyed to me their appraisal and comment; surprised and concerned exclamations about my bare arms, so white, but woe, devoid of bangles! There was actual consternation on the face of the cousin's wife as she pointed to the wealth in number and value of

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bracelets on her own arms and then to my denuded ones. What could I do but smile? Of course, I knew their invincible superstition that no bangles means widowhood. In their eyes this white woman must be wishing the death of her husband, to refrain from wearing those symbols of wifehood. Their amazed whisperings I interpreted as: "What strange color of hair!" for never had they seen other than black, and, "Hair cut short, not shaved like that of a widow, but cut at the nape of the neck! What strange being between widow and wife!" and then, "how amazingly tall," and "how distressingly thin!" "what short, oh, oh, so very short skirts!" Probably I was still tired from the packing and unpacking and the stress of traveling, for a sudden wave of irritability swept over me; I grew tired of all these searching, appraising eyes, felt a sense of resentment against the endless giggling. I turned towards the one whom I believed to be my hostess, touched hands to forehead, then in a swift smiling circle towards the others, and made for the door of the room. The little widowed sister-in-law caught up with me, with some agitated, detaining gestures and concern in her eyes and voice; but I took hold of her hand, and this time it was I who pulled toward the stairway. What was the use of staying on when I did not know what was expected of me? A number of the women accompanied me as far as the outer doorway, beyond which, of course, they could not follow. Some servants and children ran on again as my heralds, and my husband came to meet me. The little widow, with drawn veil, was still at my side. Once more we went to the brother's house, but finally, loaded down with wreaths, we made our way back again to the car and then drove up to the peace of our little hill.

Peace such as it was, for there were so many difficulties. We were without a cook. Much scurrying about unearthed one antiquated Mohammedan who knew something of cooking. At last he came and kept us from starving. We also arranged with him, bribing him with exorbitantly high wages for the locality, to come with us to the plantation, for Sarang had not succeeded in inducing anyone from Cuttack to come.

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I realized now why it was Sarang had in all the previous years never brought me to visit his own home, an omission which had puzzled and at times annoyed me. There was really no place where he could properly put up a white wife except for at most a very short stay. For every movement and every step of mine, special preparations had to be made, all of which meant unusual effort and much expense. I could not fit into the life of the town nor of the family. For instance, we had arrived at half-past ten. By twelve my tables were littered with flowers and many sweets from Sarang's family, and a big gift-tray from the palace kitchen with still more sweets. But food, real edible food, we did not get until after two o'clock.

That evening I thought over the situation. It was here, in Dhenkanal, where some day he would make his headquarters, that Sarang would build his town-house. But could there be true contact, a true home, for me in a place that had sweets and garlands for me, but could not offer me simple bread and a place by its hearth-fires? An incredible loneliness seized me at the thought. No, much rather the life in the jungle, where at least there would not be this constant rubbing against social stone walls!

I was eager to get away to the plantation. But the raja had returned, and that meant delay. Sarang was called to the palace. Then came a note for me from the secretary—if it is convenient for Mrs. Das, their highnesses, the Maharaja and Maharani, would he glad to see her at ten tomorrow.

I went to pay my respects in the well-built palace that proved to be full of all kinds of ill-assorted Western furniture and where a radio was being installed at that very moment. As I mounted to the zenana apartment of the rani, over a staircase messed up by cooing pigeons, I once more rebelled inwardly. Why was this palace of an Indian raja not built in beautiful Indian style, why did it not display to the joy of each beholder the exquisite ancient rugs, tapestries, silks, carvings and paintings of India?

If only in this state, that seemed to have no place for me, it might

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be given me to revive the feeling for the ancient beauty of living! I cherished again my dream of building on the plantation a home in pure Indian style that should in its architecture, its decorations, its furniture and draperies be a living school of Indian art. If only I had some of the money that had been so unfruitfully spent in this palace!

On a big veranda I met the rani. Here was a perfect thing: slim young body dressed exquisitely in the ancient classic garments, most carefully groomed head, gentlest voice, big-eyed and shy as a deer! Her voice came timidly and uncertainly in a few phrases and then remained silent. The difference of our life and experience gaped in an unbridgably wide gulf. Had she had children, there would have been an ever-flowing topic.

The rani had been studying English for a year, and at her side there was a small bookcase with a row of selected English classics as like and as untouched as those of many a parlor of Main Street, Gopher Prairie. It was a gift from her husband.

I rejoined Sarang, who was still with the ruler and his brother, the prince next in age. The raja and his brother were in white *dhoti*, with blue cloth sport coats of English cut. Their small black mustaches were drawn out in waxed needle points. Our *rajasahib* was a very kindly, quiet man, with a quietness that I suspected of hiding shyness; the young prince was very volubly speaking of his plans to go and study in England.

We had been received with great kindness and informality. Our talk touched upon many things. Just then the raja wanted to be told how an airplane from here could possibly nose its way unerringly over the unchartered jungle toward Calcutta, for I had spoken of the marvelous boon airplanes would be to jungle-marooned states and plantations.

We had planned to leave for our plantation as soon as possible, for Sarang had now been away from it for six weeks, and God alone knew what was left of it. But the raja kindly urged me to see Kapilas, the sacred templed hill nearby, and offered car and elephant

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to take me there. Of course, we gratefully accepted, and he gave orders then and there.

Late in the evening of that same day the raja and his brother called on us in the Guest House, to find out if we were comfortable. Again they were most kind and most informal. At parting, I mentioned something about next day's trip to Kapilas. The raja called to an accompanying official:

"What time was 'Beautiful Heroine' sent?"

It turned out the elephant had not yet even started! Annoyed, his highness charged that man with the responsibility of seeing to it that Beautiful Heroine started within the hour, in order to be at the foot of the hill by next morning when we would reach there in the motor. He gave orders simultaneously that the latter be at our door at 7 A. M., the hour I fixed.

We were ready by seven the next morning, but no motor came. We waited. A little after nine Sarang went to the palace, and saw the raja. The raja sent for one man—no, he did not think— could not tell; then for another, who also was not sure.

"Go and find out! I gave orders last night!"

Four separate men were called before it grew clear that not a thing had been attended to!

Then the elephant was sent at once, and the raja called for his motor drivers; asking which one would dare drive us up the steep hill, should the elephant be late. All assured his highness that it was too dangerous.

"But one of my cars once drove up to the temple!"

"Yes, your highness, when the road was new!"

"You can do it again!"

As Sarang left the palace, a *sepoy* called him aside. He spoke for the drivers, who did not dare approach directly.

"Sahib, please, don't drive up the hill, even if raja insists. It is too dangerous!"

As an actual fact, we did not get away until two that afternoon.

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This, and many other similar occurrences within the few days in Dhenkanal, made me realize the difficulties my husband had had to face the past years. The lassitude, indifference and procrastination of subordinates made it almost impossible ever to get anything done in time. When even the raja's direct commands were so indifferently executed, I need no longer wonder that the development of my husband's plans had been so fearfully slow.

Two and a half years had already passed since my husband had returned to his own province and his native state. Yet to his great perplexity and regret nothing was really ready even now to have me, the foreign wife, join him. It was really I who had forced my own coming.

I had been critically impatient over all this delay. But when still another two days had to be wasted in Dhenkanal over red-tape in getting the silver currency from the treasury, I began to understand. After all, why should the slow-moving system be changed just because of us two Westernized beings? To whom else did it matter that to us time seemed precious? That two weeks' difference for us might spell success or failure for one season?

My husband's temper had been slowly changing from year to year, his patience fraying at times, at others he seemed inclined to drop back exhausted into the slough of the old slow-moving grooves. He was now only at rare times his old humorous self with the jolly ringing laugh. He had become subject to touches of despondency, and to flares of hot anger. But he kept on driving himself relentlessly.

At last the morning came when the raja's car, a powerful and serviceable five-seater, stood in front of the guest house ready to take us on the first lap of our trip to Brahmakunda—that plantation of whose existence I had dreamed for more than ten years.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Brahmakunda ("The Spring of Lord Brahma") is thirty-four miles away from Dhenkanal. After the first twenty-two miles, there is the Brahmani river to cross. That far we could motor; the remaining twelve miles would have to be made on Sarang's pony and on foot. Ordinarily, bullock carts took two days to make the trip, but we would be able to manage it in one.

On the day of our departure I rose at dawn, but all my hurrying did not effect the start until seven o'clock. Passing through the town, we stopped for a moment to say good-by to the family. With great difficulty I squeezed out of the baggage-crowded car and once more entered the little courtyard. I don't know when they were more astonished: seeing me first in knee-length skirts, or now in riding breeches and sun helmet. Luckily, farewell did not take long. The little widow had again taken hold of my hand and held onto it until I reached the outer gate. She was crying, pointing back to the house and to the children hanging about. "Now you must take care of all these, now you must be *ma-bap* to us. You have taken our Sarang away; he no longer belongs to us. Without your help, what will become of them?"

"Tell her," I said to my husband, "that I shall always do whatever I can to help," and with that I hurried away.

At some outhouse Sarang delayed for a minute to take over a sack of knotted jute-string through the meshes of which shone the glint of several thousand silver rupees. My husband received it in his arms; it was so heavy that he stooped under the burden. A throng of men and children had gathered to see us off and in their full view the money was carried to the car. I asked doubtfully, "Is it safe to carry this through the jungle, when so many know of its being in our hands?"

"Absolutely! There are no robbers in Dhenkanal!" My husband laughed. "I have to take silver out there, for the *halias* and the villagers would not trust paper money."

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We stopped for a moment at a hut to pick up our cook. He brought with him a blanket rolled in a mat, and a small bundle of clothing tied in a dust cloth. This was all the preparation he needed for a prolonged sojourn. He crouched on the running board, clutching the side of the car, and on we went, past frantic bullocks, which ditched their carts in terror at our approach. At this early hour it was quite cold. The gray-haired cook was dressed only in loincloth and a cotton shirt which billowed in the wind. "Sarang," I called out after a mile or two, "stop and let him sit on the floor, inside."

"There is no room," Sarang answered; and the car went on.

The first six miles up to the templed hill of Kapilas were passably good road, for the raja and the townspeople often visited this hill. A swath twenty feet wide had been cleared on each side as protection against fires and wild animals. Beyond this cleared ground an impenetrable green wall rose. I had not noticed much of the villages and country folk that we had passed some distance back, nor of the forest here, for my eyes were mostly on the old cook. The moment we passed beyond the hill of Kapilas the road grew worse. At the first severe jolting, he lurched and clung more tightly. "Do stop the car, and let him get in. He is frozen and will fall off; he is too old to stand this."

"There is no room," my husband repeated impatiently. "He is all right, he is used to it."

"But you can let him sit on the floor, just inside the door, with his feet on the running board; he can hold the door to with his hands."

"And run the risk of smashing the raja's car? He is all right, I tell you!"

The road was now merely a bullock cart-track with deep wheel-ruts, stones, and roots of jungle giants adding flavor. I kept silent, not wanting to spoil the day from the start. But at the next pernicious jolt, I insisted the car should stop. Under protest, I seated the cook in the shelter of the door, glad to see that his shirt no longer filled like a sail and that his shaking ceased. On we went. Precious little I saw of the country we passed through, for it was the most incredible

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road. Between being flung against the top of the car and clutching wildly at the bamboo crate of chickens that slithered about on top of the dancing piles of baggage, and trying to devise occasional rest for bumped and cramped knees, I had all I could do. In several places the bottom of the car scraped heavily against the welts of dry sod between cart ruts. In one place we dipped suddenly at an incredible angle into the dry creek-bed of a monsoon torrent. It was at least fifteen feet deep, strewn with big boulders, and the deep monsoon mud caked into scarred ridges and lumps. Bullock-cart tracks meandered through this confusion and up on the other side. It was more than I could do to picture loaded carts making the grade at all; I turned sick at the thought of the beating and tail-twisting needed to bring bullocks over this terrible stretch. Even on the steep down-grade the car jammed so underneath that it took great effort to get it going again. I barely managed to save the toppling baggage, soothe rny startled dog and keep the necks of my precious chickens from being broken.

So this was what the roads were like in an inland native state— roads that connected important villages and were the essential arteries for the teeming rural life of hundreds of miles around! Yet I knew that other sections through which the raja or British officials had to pass had decent roads. I wish the damn car would smash, I thought viciously; I wish all his cars would smash on these roads! For the moment there was distinctly no love for rajas in my heart, not even gratefulness over the kindness of having this car at our disposal at all. What a frightful waste on teams and men such roads implied!

Some time later, as we stopped for a drink out of our thermos flasks, I asked in deep disgust: "Does no one ever do anything to these roads?"

"Oh, yes, once a year," came the answer. "Once a year when the British forest officer or some high official comes through on a tour. Then for about three weeks beforehand laborers are rounded up from all the villages and repairs are made that are not intended to last for more than the purpose of just this trip."

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"Aren't the British aware of this?"

"Maybe, maybe not. There is a lot that they don't know of and are not meant to realize, or else don't care to notice.";

Suddenly the meaning of an observation struck me to which, in my preoccupation with baggage, I had paid little attention. At the beginning of our trip, parts of the road had been freshly repaired and at one or two places we had passed a group of villagers at work. I formed my surprised question.

"Yes, the moment the state engineer heard of our arrival, rapid word had been sent along the route that the roads should be made passable for a motor. But as we came so suddenly, the notice was too short. The men have been unable to reach that ravine, the worst spot of all."

Once again I was in a maze of conflicting thoughts and emotions such as India had a knack of throwing me in. What thoughtful kindness on the part of the state authorities to go to such trouble for my trip, yet what damnably bad social housekeeping that it should be necessary to repair roads for special occasions and special persons—splurges of efforts that resulted only in temporary improvements, instead of steady, lasting ground-work. If only I did not have such an absurdly wide-awake social conscience. Then I could take simple pleasure, even pride, in the fact that special efforts were made for my sake, be properly grateful for the real kindness the raja was undoubtedly showing me. Instead, here I was, thinking of the poor villagers and the tortured bullock teams! If only I had been an artist from the start, and never a student of social science and economics! If only I had not sprung from such a socially perfect country as Switzerland, how much happier I should be in India!

God, what a joy it would be if just for a few years I could have the income of this state to dispose of as I chose! For instead of the excessively large and expensive administration buildings that the British started, decent roads should be built from village to village, wells sunk, tanks cleared, rest-houses built, schools opened.

"Wait till you find," laughed my husband, "how little one is able

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to do anywhere here in the jungle, before you get gay with the state's revenue."

During the heat of the day we reached the last clump of houses near the Brahmani river sands. There were our two bullock carts and Bajya, who had been sent on the day before, with Sarang's horse. The raja had offered Sarang a second riding horse, but to my surprise he had refused. "Too much trouble to send it back," a remark the meaning of which I was to realize soon enough.

In the center of a crowd of eager villagers we had our lunch.

As the endless palavering and delay over any start in India always annoyed me, I got on the horse and rode ahead, following the track of buffalo carts through the sands that gleamed under the burning sun for a stretch of over half a mile between me and the Brahmani. The horse stumbled heavily, for with each step his hoofs sank deep. The air beat down on my sun helmet in molten heat. Behind me trotted Bulu with lolling tongue. I was panting as I dropped off the horse at the river's edge; yet this was still only the beginning of January, the coldest season of the year. There were some stacks of straw that had been unloaded from boats; I sank down in the foot of shadow that they offered. Looking back, half way across the sands, I saw the struggling lines of our carts, coolies, and servants, ahead of them all, Sarang in his tight khaki breeches, leather puttees, and shoes that must by now be chuck-full of sand. If I, riding, had grown so exhausted, what must they feel? I got up again, pointed the nose of my pony in their direction and hit it vigorously, hoping that I could bring it to go and meet my husband; but it merely let its head sink lower and stubbornly turned back towards the water. In streams of perspiration my husband came up at last.

Then there was lengthy signaling to boatmen on the other shore. For more than an hour we had to wait on those shadowless burning sands before everything was ready to cross. The men with the bullock carts and baggage would take their own time from there on, but we kept two coolies with us to carry such indispensable and precious things as tooth brushes, thermos bottles, food, and live chickens.

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The latter were my greatest care; I would not trust them with the bullock carts. The huge high-stilted cock had started out a very arrogant husband, but by now looked very squatty and subdued. I put him into a bamboo crate by himself, the two co-wives into another, and one coolie carried the two crates, carefully shaded from the burning sun by a cover of green leaves, slung from either end of a long pole.

The boat into which we stepped seemed a very leaky affair, but Bulu was well content to squat in a pool of water at my feet. Last of all, our servant Bajya entered, pulling the horse by its bridle into the river, close up to the side of the boat. The saddle, of course, had already been stored away. The flat-bottom boat pushed off into the shallow water, the horse snortingly splashing after. Suddenly the river deepened beyond the horse's depth, and then I saw a most amazing thing.

"What on God's earth are you doing!" I exclaimed. "You are not going to try to get that brute into the boat?" For Bajya, well forward, was pulling on the horse's bridle, holding its head with a tight clutch high above the water. Another man had reached out and desperately clung to the tail, drawing the body tightly against the gunwale and pulling upward with all his might. The pony's eyes were popping in fright, it snorted and blew and bit into the edge of the gunwale, beating about with its front legs.

"Of course we're not going to take him into the boat," said my husband, a bit scornfully, "but we have to get him across somehow."

"Let him swim, for pity's sake. No use holding him like that!" I exclaimed.

"You don't want him to drown, do you?"

"For heaven's sake, horses can swim," I snapped.

The frightful heat of the last two hours had been telling and my nerves were frayed. This absurd performance was too much for me. My husband, equally out of temper, kept silent.

Just then, the struggling horse succeeded in getting a hoof on the edge of the boat and we came perilously near shipping water.

"For heaven's sake, let him go," I shouted, looking with fright at

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the huge expanse of water around us."

"Oh, keep quiet; the men know what they are doing. It isn't the first time they have taken a horse across; it is always, done like this."

"Well, just because they have always been fools, that's no reason why they should keep it up or why we should risk our lives. I tell you a horse can swim!"

"What do you know about it?"

"I do know about it. I know that ranchers in the States ford streams with their horses; I have read of it a hundred times."

"I'm not going to risk my horse because of what you think you have read."

"No, you would rather risk my neck, wouldn't you?" I said, choking with sudden anger; for just then the pony, always trying to escape the clutches of the men and get its head down to a normal swimming level, almost overturned our boat.

"Yes, you always know better than anyone else," my husband shouted back at me, as he helped to subdue the horse.

"My God, I do, I do," I said under my breath, with clenched teeth, and kept a stubborn silence for the rest of that crossing.

The glare of the sun on the water was unbearable and my head throbbed to bursting. I turned to quiet Bulu, who was all in a tremble with excitement. For the moment, he seemed my only friend in this strange, white, pitiless expanse.

As the boat touched shore on the other side, the horse drenched us with a shower as it frantically clambered up the embankment and then stood trembling. I shot him a pitying glance and then jumped out of the boat without a word and climbed up the embankment. This shore was not so desolate as the opposite shore had been. Just here, there were some trees and boatmen's and fishermen's huts.

Some time elapsed before everything was ready for us to go on. I had the chance to cool a bit, both mentally and physically. "It was the heat, just the heat, and the darned fools didn't know any better," I told myself. I also recalled the scorching plodding through heavy

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sand on the opposite side, the fuss and annoyance that my husband had had in getting the loads adjusted and everyone started. And, after all, until he got this one bow-legged pony for the plantation, he had never been near any horses at all. In the States it had all been machines for him, and in this, his native state, horses were almost nonexistent; it was all bullocks and buffaloes.

Feeling a bit ashamed of myself and a bit sorry, yet still not quite ready to speak—for he had never before addressed me with such abruptness—I decided to do my share of walking right then and there and leave the pony to Sarang. I called Bajya to me: "Where is the path?"

He pointed vaguely landward in a direct line, while the marks of wheels swung away to the right. I started on ahead, alone, to cross the river sands. It was frightfully heavy going. After a few minutes I fairly cascaded with perspiration. I left the path faintly marked by feet, and sought out a nearby stretch of sparse grass, which here covered some of the sand. It was a tremendous relief not to be sinking in at every step. From then on I zigzagged back and forth, choosing these grassy bits. Suddenly I heard shouting back of me: "Memsahib, Memsahib," and turned to see Bajya running after me, pulling the horse behind him, so I stopped short. He, too, was drenched with perspiration from his swift run. "Sahib sends you the horse. He is coming soon." This was Sarang's old kindness again. So instead of mounting, I waited for him to catch up. He came, the heavy double-barreled shotgun weighing him down.

"'Do take the horse a while," I pleaded. After much persuasion he agreed to ride halfway across the remaining sands, and I went on with Bajya. But I gave out sooner than my intention, and was only too glad to climb up again.

"How on earth can you stand this heat?" I exclaimed, "It is killing."

There was no doubt about it, neither Sarang nor Bajya seemed to suffer half so much as I. I recalled an incident of California days when another girl and I, after a long tramp of seventeen miles, had gone

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in bathing at the beach of Carmel with a Hindu friend. Lying down in the sands, with our faces sheltered in the hollow of our arms, we had all dropped into a dead sleep. The first one of us awoke an hour and a half later. My friend and I were fearfully sunburned, huge blisters in the tender hollows of our knees making walking almost impossible, while the Hindu showed not a trace of discomfort. I happened to recall this incident as I rode on over a bare stretch of land towards a grove of mango, sal and tamarind trees that hid a village. Here we rested for a time and drank far too heartily, so that our water supply ran perilously low. Looking at the slimy village tank with its ugly green scum, I knew there could be no thought of filling our bottles, so on we went.

From there on, our path lay across a wide stretch of treeless plain in which the yellow dry earth was gashed into deep, gaping fissures. Whatever crops there had been were gathered, and a heavy burning desolateness brooded over it all. In the distance there was the promise of green trees and beyond them the faint blue of hills. I insisted on alternate walking and riding, but to my shame and regret I realized, before reaching the end of the plain, that during the heat of this day I would do very little more walking.

Half-way across we saw two black specks moving towards us that every now and then changed to a glint of blinding white. As they came nearer I realized it was two men with black-lined and white-covered umbrellas, well-to-do villagers, no doubt. Within about two hundred yards of us they suddenly closed their umbrellas and stepped off the path, waiting respectfully to let us pass. My husband spoke a few words to them and they answered with smiling hesitation.

"They say the next village is two green branches away from here," he told me laughingly.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, that is the way they measure distance in the jungle. You break a branch from a tree and carry it in your hand until it wilts."

"But," I questioned, "from what tree? Not all leaves will wilt

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equally soon."

"Oh, they didn't specify; such little things don't matter. Time and distance don't mean much in the jungle."

I turned back. The two men still stood there, staring after us. "Look, they have opened their umbrellas again. Why did they close them?"

"Sign of respect. Umbrellas in India have always designated royalty. Now, in these degenerate days," my husband grinned, "see who is using them! But in villages the old idea is still strong enough to make the low castes feel uncomfortable in assuming such privileges. So your American-imported democratic umbrella still folds up at the approach of the lords."

My husband said all this smilingly. But then suddenly he continued with a changed voice that startled me a bit with its sound of old-time mastery: "By Jove, if any one of these men thirty years ago had even dared to carry an umbrella, open or closed, we would have ordered our servants to go, take it from him and break it at our feet!"

"You sound as if you felt inclined to do it now!" I laughed.

"What? I? Good democrat that I am?" he grinned back. "But really you have no idea what things used to be like here, a very short time ago. You remember that ancient Kishen in the scarlet shirt? He got that out of me by insisting the family would be disgraced if the new Memsahib saw its oldest retainer badly dressed! Goodness knows how old he is! He served both my father and his father before him. Well, one time the raja had called my grandfather suddenly to the palace: 'Day after tomorrow I've got to have a certain sum to pay the British tribute. Get it!' My grandfather came away in black despair. How on God's earth could he get so much money on such short notice! It seemed impossible. He squatted on his veranda in brooding misery, when old Kishen came up to him.

"'Babu, give me full rights and I'll get the money for you.'

"'How are you going to do it?' grandfather asked scornfully.

"'Don't ask, Your Honor. I'll get it—just give me power.'

"In less than twenty-four hours Kishen was back, laying a bag of

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money at my grandfather's feet, more than enough to cover the required sum. He had gathered a gang of men armed with clubs and spears, hounded a village notoriously backward in paying taxes, and done his forceful collecting."

Sarang let go his light hold on my stirrup, and stepped back as the path grew narrower and rougher. For a space there was nothing but the creaking of my saddle underneath and the burning sun overhead. My husband's story had made the world of which I was a part seem very far away; an alien world with ancient ways surged up around me and for a moment I felt very small and very lonesome.

As we came to the "two branches away" village we halted to get water from a deep cool well at the base of an immense *banyan*. Then we pushed on, for it would not be safe to reach the plantation after dark. For some miles the road led through untouched jungle.

"This is part of my forest reservation," Sarang said.

"Our forest!" I exclaimed, thrilled.

A young Hindu guard had joined us at the last village. At a tiny clearing he suddenly pointed ahead:

"Just over there is where I saw a tiger the last time I passed along this road at noon."

Instinctively I drew closer to the guard. Jungle life was all at once very real!

After a while we heard the sound of axes and came to a section where several acres of trees had been felled and piles of trunks lined the road. A number of Sarang's *halias* had been busy here for many months. This was the lumber from which he had hoped to pay both clearing expenses and a good part of the initial cost of the land.

While Sarang followed the sound of the axes, I sat down in the high, dry, yellow jungle grass by the side of the road. The young forest guard was telling me that an old wild boar had been causing amazing damage in a nearby village, coming into compounds and gardens with unprecedented daring. Villagers are not permitted to kill wild game, but they begged the forester to come and shoot it.

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He did so, and sold the carcass to them for five rupees. As in the case of man-eating tigers, it was found out that his depredations among the world of humans had been due to weakness, not courage; he was too ill any longer to obtain a living from the harsh jungle. The flesh of this tusker was found to be alive with maggots that had entered through festering wounds. Yet so incredibly poor is the diet of the villagers and so insufficient, that in their craving for meat they devoured every bit of that rotten flesh.

When Sarang returned from his woodcutters, he looked worried and depressed. For weeks there had been practically no sales of wood, while thieving was increasing in all parts of his forest reserve; not only that, but trees felled at Sarang's expense were being spirited away overnight. A number of guilty villagers had been identified, and he would be compelled to prosecute these in court in an effort to stop further depredation. At the beginning of this, his second year, he was faced with a loss of many hundred rupees instead of the expected gain. In order to be able to sell any cut trees at all, he had at last issued orders to sell wood at one rupee (thirty-three cents) per two-bullock cart piled as high as cart could hold and bullocks could pull. But even at this price, which no longer covered cost of clearing, he could not get rid of the wood.

The forest guard had left us, but from the next village a man followed at a close but respectful distance. Sarang and I had been talking over the wood question and paid no attention to this villager. During a brief silence while changing horse, this man had suddenly come forward with an anxious torrent of words and prostrated himself full length in the dust of the road at the feet of my husband. I was shocked, but my husband remained unmoved. A few brief, clipped phrases, and without looking at the man again, he went on.

"Oh, what is it?" I asked, deeply disturbed, for I have never been able to overcome a hurt dislike of prostration, though it is so common in India.

"My nephew, who is in charge of the forest, has had him subpoenaed for wood-stealing and the rascal now begs me to let him off."

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"Can't you do it?"

"No, he'd steal again tomorrow!"

I kept quiet, for, remembering my husband's great financial worries, I felt I must not interfere. But my heart was heavy. This was so very different from things as I had pictured them in my dreams of a future plantation.

I had had the idea that wherever we would settle in India, the condition of everyone, directly or indirectly connected with us, would be bettered. Here, almost the first result of our coming into the jungle, was to make the circumstances of many of the villagers worse than they had been before. Here were these thousands of acres of forest, to which the villagers had formerly helped themselves almost without any restraint, now suddenly closed to them. Formerly it had been the maharaja's—virtually no one's—-now it was our property, and all at once the villagers were faced with the demand that they must pay for their building materials.

If only Sarang were not struggling under the terrific handicap of lack of initial capital. As it was, he was absolutely compelled to calculate the spending of every penny and to grasp after every incoming one. If there had been just a margin of a few thousands, how different things could have been.

I saw ourselves clearing great tracts of this forest and turning over as a gift to the villagers the necessary lumber from these magnificent ancient trees to build or repair their communal centers, their schoolhouses, their bridges. But we had no money whatever of our own. The raja had come forward generously with some initial loans for which, however, we would have to pay compound interest at the rate of nine per cent, in itself no small matter, although a low rate locally. But it was not enough for the proper large-scale start for which Sarang had hoped. He found no further support nor response. None of the important men of his province, some of whom were excessively rich, came forward with any backing. Sarang's sort of patriotism did not appeal to them. It neither offered any promise of quick returns nor did it bring any renown from press or platform.

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They found it far more profitable to stick to old-time usurious money-lending: quick period loans on jewelry, or for seed backed by the security of the next crop. This sort of loan quite generally brings from ten to thirty per cent per month and is, next to crushing taxation, the biggest factor in bringing about the endless, inescapable misery of the peasantry.

Before it had been possible for me to come to the plantation, I had been to Calcutta, to Delhi, to Bombay. In these centers, among my friends, I had tried repeatedly to rouse interest in Sarang's effort. But among the great politicians and the great intellectuals not one was interested enough in this attempt at agriculture in the farthest jungle of the most backward province of India. Moreover, I found Indian capitalists considered it unsafe to invest in native states.

"We don't doubt your husband, for we know you" (most of these did not know Sarang personally), "and your present raja may be quite all right, as you say, but in none of these small native states is there enough security. Any change, any whim, and you are gone. The least bit of bad will on the part of a ruler, or the inevitable welter of intrigues among the officials, can kill the finest enterprise."

I was riding along silently, after leaving the prostrate thief in the road, thinking of all these things. Sarang, as silent as myself, was plodding along very wearily by now, a few paces ahead of me. "Sarang," I called out. He stopped and let me come up. "Is it true, if the Maharaja or any of the high officials bore you any ill-will that they could materially hurt your enterprise or possibly even smash it?"

He did not answer for a while. Then he said slowly: "They might!"

"In what way?"

"Oh, in a hundred ways. For instance, the only permanent laborers available here are the *halias*. '*Halia*.' literally means 'yoke'; *halias* are men as bound as bullocks are to the yoke. I had bonded fifty men last year; for each one of these men I had to pay anywhere from ten to one hundred rupees so that they could clear their debts to their former employers and be free to come to me. At the end of one

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year they are again free to go, provided they have, out of their savings, cleared this debt to me. Most of them are lazy, ignorant, and irresponsible. Though fifty were on my list last year, there were practically never more than thirty-five present, and often fewer. They disappear sometimes for a week or even months and then turn up again. Scolding or threatening does no good. I have hesitated to resort to the usual practice of beating them. But once or twice, when some important work was hopelessly delayed because of these scamps, I have hit out with my fists against one or the other. These haven't run away again and are now counted among my best workers. It is all hopeless and demoralizing. But their tradition has moulded them so that they can understand no other language."

"But what have the raja or the other officials to do with this?" "More than you realize. In the first place, it is the village constables who, considering me the raja's man and in his graces, have done all they could to help me secure the best men available; and now when one of them runs away and doesn't return within a few days, word goes out and it is these same constables that bring him back from anywhere within the limits of this and of neighboring states. In courtesy, Dhenkanal does the same for the neighboring raj, Sukhinda. Supposing the Maharaja or the head of the police of this state, for any reason whatever, got a grudge against me; it is possible that not one of these men would ever be brought back again, and it would even be conceivable that they might induce others to leave me also. There would be my land, but no one to work it. There is no one to whom I could complain or appeal for justice.

"Thank heaven," he continued, "I can rely on our raja, and all the officials are friendly to me. The only objection I have heard thus far has come, I'm told, from the British political agent. He is objecting. He thinks that the ten thousand acres of forest that have been reserved for me by contract are too much. He need not worry too soon, God knows," Sarang said with a touch of bitterness. "That same contract binds me to the clearing of a given number of acres, a fixed amount of irrigation work, and acreage planted to cane by

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the end of my first five years. Failing this, the contract is automatically cancelled and I will retain only a thousand acres. The incredible slowness, all the difficulties that I could not possibly have foreseen, seem to make it pretty doubtful if I'll be able to comply, especially since no one is forthcoming with further financial help."

This was not very cheerful conversation with which to approach my future home, for now I was told we were really getting near the plantation. But at this moment I felt too much like a debutante circus rider, to concentrate further on these problems; my pony was picking its way delicately along the smooth foot-polished ridges of dry mud that separate paddy-fields. These ridges are never straight-lined, but twist in and out, back and forth, in crazy patterns, and are nowhere even a foot wide, but about a foot in height. If the pony slipped, I would be ditched among sharp-edged bone-dry clods of earth still studded with jagged stubble.

I couldn't protest and hold my breath at the same time; all I could do was to keep quiet. As soon as we were out of the maze of paddy-fields, I jumped off. "Why on earth didn't we keep to the road?" "This short-cut has saved us over a mile, and they say that stretch of road lies through tiger-infested jungle. Not so very long ago a man and his son were conveying a bullock cart along that road. The boy was walking at the head of the team, the father followed behind with an old blunderbuss on his shoulder. They had done so many a previous time alone and fearlessly, for tigers here do not attack men who carry guns. After a long period of silent plodding, the boy turned around to speak to his father. There was no father. He shouted; there was no reply. He ran ahead screaming, until he reached the nearest village. Villagers immediately followed him back over the road. At one spot they found the gun safely leaning against a tree; here no doubt the father had felt the need to step off the road for a minute. A tiger must have been following them, watching the opportunity afforded by a momentary abandoning of the gun, and must have leaped instantly. For never again was a sign of the father found. So," my husband concluded

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with a grin, that showed me how he relished revealing the real jungle to me, "though I have my gun, I thought you and I had better cross the fields here, as we have outstripped the others."

We turned from the path which led from the ricefields into the cart-road again. A bit further on it dipped once more into jungle. I looked forward into the green, sun-flecked mystery, and back over the ricefields, then along that fated road, over which our men and our carts would come.

"Hadn't we—hadn't we better wait for them?" I ventured. My husband laughed. "All right!" and threw his gun down. "Keep the gun!" I shouted. He exploded into one of his old-time roars of genuine amusement.

"Don't worry. We are not likely to be bothered within sight of these ricefields," he reassured me. Nevertheless, he drew the gun near him as we sat down under a spreading *banyan* to wait for our caravan.

The next village we approached was Odisso, where Sarang had lived in the comfortless one-room schoolhouse for many months the previous year while his first houses were being built two miles away at Brahmakunda.

A troop of men and children met us, all agog with eagerness. They had erected a gate of welcome across the road, with gay strips of colored paper and rag banners. One or two of the more important men saluted me, hands to forehead, the others stood by in shy silence. The head-man spoke to Sarang, while some of the villagers fairly flung themselves on our cartmen and servants with eager questions.

Unable to do more, I smiled in all directions, and rode past. At the end of the village, at a shy distance of a hundred feet, the women and older girls were gathered. As I came into view, they set up that shrill, strange cry of auspicious welcoming, that greets such occasions: they emitted a very high continuous o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o that caught a curious vibrating quality because of a rapid sideways movement of the tongue. They did not come near me, but smiled in friendly eagerness across the gulf of our utter strangeness. I waved to them,

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and again rode on, quite alone this time, for Sarang and the men were still talking.

I was dog-tired, and the noise of men and children, the wild wailing o-o-o-o-o-o of the women, the wild barking of the dogs, suddenly clutched me beyond endurance. I wanted to escape from these dozens of staring eyes, and felt incredibly forlorn and helpless. These were to be my neighbors for all the years to come! What bridge could ever be built to bring me truly near? Odisso! What a lovely name, but hiding what misery! My first glance revealed a mere huddle of mud-huts surrounded by thorny hedges to keep the wild beasts away, a tiny mud-walled temple, a village well, a few poor fields in turn walled-in by the dread jungle— nothing more. The men were dressed in dingy earth-colored loincloths only, except for the head-man and one or two others who sported shirts; the women wore poor cotton saris of the same dingy earth-color; the children for the most part were stark naked, or else lost for the occasion in father's or mother's spare cloth that wrapped them from head to foot, and let only a huge-eyed curiosity peep forth.

I had read much of the poverty of Orissa villages. A single serious failure of crops could devastate whole districts; in village after village famine would wipe out first the young, the old and the weak; then those with enough strength left would take to the roads in an attempt to reach less stricken regions. Those who succeeded would try to find work, and never returned to their village. This past year's famine alone had emptied entire villages.

Odisso and the other utterly drab villages that I had passed during this weary day made me realize with appalling vividness how near to destitution the life of these villagers is. Would I be able to bear it, to make myself part of it? I wondered as I rode alone toward the jungle's edge. Yet I was buoyed up by looking forward to our own plantation; there things would be different, surely!

Before I reached the jungle's edge, there was shouting behind me, and two men came running. From their motions I gathered that they meant to show me the way and protect me. They were not our

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own men, but villagers, with axes slung over bare shoulders. I turned back, and saw my husband still in conversation. A wave of his hand assured me, and I rode on with them.

It was late afternoon; orange gleams of sun lay heavy over the tree-tops in the hot, still air, and played at our feet in the darkening underbrush. The cart-track twisted willy-nilly to avoid big boulders, tree-trunks, or huge snaky roots.

I rode these last two miles in a daze of emotion, weariness and expectation.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The road dipped into a dry gully, then over upward-sloping rocks. Suddenly, two hundred yards ahead of me, I saw a group of thatched houses — BRAHMAKUNDA!

At that instant a shot was fired, then another and still another. My pony shied, and I turned surprised eyes toward my husband. "A royal salute for your Majesty," he grinned.

As we came nearer, a group of men ran towards us, foremost of all a slim, keen-eyed young man who made me a profound *pranam*. "This is Narottam, my nephew." Two men stood on each side of the road with smoking blunderbusses, near an arch of welcome. From there on, poles were erected on both sides of the road. From pole to pole jute ropes were strung. Stuck in the strands a few inches apart there hung alternately peacock feathers and mango leaves, the most auspicious welcome possible. I wanted to dismount, but at some quick words from his nephew, my husband begged me to ride on. He said smiling, "Don't spoil their *tamasha*." How much of a *tamasha* my arrival was, I' realized at once. Everything was so incredibly spick and span: road swept, loincloths clean, bodies tense and eyes eagerly expectant.

First we passed a lot of piled-up tree-trunks and planks set out to dry. Then on the left-hand side, big mounds of unhusked paddy within a palisaded enclosure. Beyond this, there was a huge enclosure fenced about by rough, slender tree-trunks dug into the ground from which there carne the reek of bullocks. On our right-hand side were a number of buildings in a row. First, the smithy — my husband explained as we went on — then the cook house, then the supervisors' house, and then some storehouses. Opposite these storehouses there was a two-roomed house flanked on all sides by a little veranda. "My and my nephew's quarters." Set at right angles to this group of buildings was a long shed open on three sides, the *halias* cooking and sleeping quarters. The rope garlands of peacock feathers and mango leaves led me along between these houses in such

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a way that I could at first glance take in everything. On my right, as I turned, I saw another building, the two end rooms of which were granaries, while the open center section was a tool shed. Leaving this, we crossed a wide open space towards a green leaf-enclosure such as I had never seen before. Beyond this there were some small sheds—jute storerooms—and then an immense building, the buffalo house.

As I came nearer I saw a fence about three feet high, of freshly cut branches stuck in the ground with all leaves intact. Spliced stripped branches were placed at right angles to these, lashing them together. A wide, gateless opening led through this fence into an enclosure about a hundred feet square.

I dismounted. The rope garland also ended here. Two freshly cut banana trees, brought from afar, but still green and sturdy, were stuck in the ground at each; side of this opening. *A* round space at their base was carefully cleared of grass. Here, on a. little pile of unhusked rice, were placed two black earthern water pots each holding in its mouth, within a wreath of mango leaves, a coconut—offerings to the gods. Auspicious signs were painted on these pots in red and white, among which I instantly recognized the sacred *"aum"* the *logos*—keystone of all creation!

Within the leaf fence there was the most amazing structure; even my husband exclaimed in surprise. Poles about nine feet high had been dug into the ground at intervals to form an enclosure thirty-five feet square. Within, other poles held up the framework of the roof. Walls and the roof were formed by freshly cut branches laced tightly together, whose leaves were so thick that sunlight penetrated only in a faint flicker here and there. A lovely cool green light pervaded this wide space. In the center, the roof was broken by a large square opening through which a cloth tent projected upwards. A foot or so above the peak of this tent another leaf-roof stretched well beyond the opening of the lower, affording sure protection against the sun.

Narottam spoke to my husband, who then explained to me:

"This is the cloth-tent the raja is lending us. When I reached Dhenkanal over a month ago, I sent it back from there with instructions to

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have it erected before we'd return. Now Narottam tells me he went and lay in it after it had been put up to find out how it felt. It was so hot at noon that he decided Memsahib would not be happy in it; so they stretched a leaf-roof over it and then, still not content, decided to build a huge enclosure all around for your comfort and privacy."

I was profoundly touched and begged my husband to express my warmest thanks. It was extremely thoughtful on the part of Narottam, who had never left his jungle home nor ever before been in contact with a white person.

The ground between the outer fence and this mansion of leaves had been cleared of all grass and stumps; within my leaf tent, also, the ground had been cleared and beaten flat. Both these sections had a hard, smooth surface that felt soft, springy and pleasant to the feet. Outside, they had erected a small bath tent with raised wooden floor and rough bench for wash-bowls. About fifteen yards away, against the outer fence, there stood a tiny structure, four feet square, the absence of which had delayed my coming to the plantation for months, before I unearthed the trouble.

"I cannot induce any sweeper to come; they won't leave their villages," Sarang had finally written. "You cannot go into the bush as we do. I don't know what to do!"

Then I had sent the simple plan of the building of this toilet, with full descriptions as to how it would once and forever settle the terrible sweeper-question; it would just as simply solve it for most of India, if India knew and chose!

So, before Narottam and the supervisors withdrew, and left us to rest and dean up, I had seen every building on the place. My home!

But I was too weary to take it in fully that day. My first act the following day was to water the ceremonial banana trees at the entrance, for should they take root, the men would consider it as auspicious to the plantation. (And grow they did!) Then I proceeded to get myself oriented, making a tour from building to building. According to village standards, it was an imposing array, although all of them were temporary buildings, as are most buildings in all villages. The bullock house was, I was told, the largest and best built in the State. All the buildings were

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of rough lumber, poles let directly into the hard soil, interlaced by smaller branches, and then coated with mud. Floors and walls were all a smooth mud, like the adobe buildings of old California. There were heavy thatches of rice-straw, cooler than stone roofs. The granary was raised on poles, carefully built. But like all other buildings, it was already riddled by rats, and white ants were everywhere. The houses would last scarcely three years.

When the plantation starts paying, when there is money to buy and import cement, to prepare and tar lumber properly, to bring carpenters and builders from afar, some permanent houses will be built. Sarang had expected to be able to build a cool, comfortable substantial house for me by the first year. But he could not possibly foresee all the difficulties; we will be lucky if there is one at the end of the fourth or fifth year. Not enough money, not enough men. Every cartload of supplies, building-cement, food, machinery or seed takes at least two men, two bullocks, and five days to fetch from the nearest railway station—until better roads are built. But how soon the State will realize the advisability of this, we cannot tell.

The group of houses, an embryo village, lay on the edge of our clearing on absolutely flat ground. Only last year this clearing, about one mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, had been cut into the heart of the jungle. All the stumps were still standing, as our American stump puller was not effective in this hard-baked soil. It would have taken too much time to dig them out. Within three years they would rot and be eaten away by white ants. Crops had been planted in between, bullocks meandering around with the simple plows. Along one side of the jungle the felled trees had not yet been removed, but even here in spots paddy was sown between them.

It is to be a sugar plantation in the long run, but for the first year rotation dry crops had been planted—paddy, jute, kulti, sesame, dal. It had been an unremitting fight against depredation from white ants and wild beasts—elephant, bear, boar, monkey, deer. These had taken heavy toll despite nightly watching. Fire, noisy tins, shouting, two blunderbusses—for effect, not for killing—had been the only means

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of fighting off the jungle. For the first year, Sarang had not obtained a gun-license. The British are wary in letting guns get into the hands of Indians. Apparently they considered Sarang in the heart of the jungle in less danger of his life, than the British empire would have been, had he had a gun in his hands while he rode over his land. Still, even so, poor as the weapons of defense had been, deer at least had receded a little during the year, though even now we could hear the herds nightly a few hundred yards away.

At last Sarang had obtained a license, even if it had been granted only for this state. He was refused an all-India one, God knows why. English dry-goods clerks, wanting to leave Calcutta for a yearly shoot, have no difficulty in obtaining all-India licenses. The neighboring state of Sukhinda touched our property, in fact interlaced. When we went to Mochapal, our garden place across the river, the path took us for a few hundred yards across Sukhinda territory. Strictly interpreted, the law forbade us to carry the gun across that bit of jungle. We hoped the tigers had not turned barristers or informers, or we were lost.

Our plantation—*Brahmakunda,* the Spring of Lord Brahma—took its name from a far-famed pool in a deep cleft in rocks under huge overhanging trees. Its waters were said to be healing; they tasted pure and sweet and were marvelously cool in hottest summer. Our bathing and cooking water was drawn from there, two hundred yards away from the houses. It had to be brought in tins slung from a pole over the shoulders of a water-carrier. The man avoided going to the spring in the heat of day, for then a tiger had been seen half lying in it, cooling himself. I wondered, was it he that provided the healing qualities?

The *halias* got their water from a bund fifty yards away from the buildings; it was rain-water stored during monsoons. The bullocks and buffalos also drank there.

Everyone appeared content with these arrangements. But to me it seemed too bad to have so little water. I also regretted that every tree around the buildings had been cut. But I was told that with

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virgin jungle so near, the danger would have been too great to keep shade trees, for they would shelter beasts and serpents.

The plantation was a very brave undertaking, and from the Indian point of view a very brave show. But to make it livable for me, to drown the childhood memory of Swiss country life which this return to the land brought up in me, somehow, sometime, I would have to introduce the elements of comfort and beauty into all this. That alone would turn the plantation into a home!

The circle of jungle around had its great, wild, terrible beauty; to one side blue hills rose. The drab, hot, yellow plain sets off their cool peace. And sunrise and sunset, with their rusty clarion call of hundreds of peacocks, were color-rich beyond words.

As I looked at my little domain of buildings, plain, jungle, and men, for I was the only woman in several square miles, when I noticed the shy, puzzled glances that our *halias* riveted on me wherever I went, whatever I did—I wondered, wondered intensely, if it would be possible for me, a white woman, to create a true home out of it all!

I had brought my camera to the plantation and also planned to make many sketches. But I took only one photograph and made three sketches. Once only during the first two months did I get away from the plantation into a village four miles away and that just to go and tend a woman with a hurt foot who was unable to come to me.

From the first day on I saw more work waiting to be done than I knew how to take care of. This year Sarang had bonded only thirty *halias*. There were twenty-five the gala day I arrived. We gave them a goat for feasting, a rare treat. A few asked leave to take some meat to wife and children, none of-whom had yet been persuaded to leave their villages and live here. Other *halias* ran away without the formality of "may we?" One week after we reached the place, only thirteen men of the thirty were present. How much my coming had to do with this, I had no means of knowing. Sarang looked very worried, and had to rely largely on labor from the peasants

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who streamed in every morning from villages miles away, in the hope of finding work on such days when their own fields did not claim them.

I realized soon what a frightful problem and extra expense all this presented to Sarang. Yet the work which I saw it in my power to take care of seemed to me as important as the field and dam-building, since it would make for more comfort for Sarang during the broiling summer months when I would have to go to the hills again. So a tug of war started between Sarang and myself over the use of men.

"Sarang, I want to make a food-cooler out of that packing box and the netting I brought. Can someone help me?"

"There is only one man here today who could help you, and he is shaping ploughshares and will be busy for over a week."

"Sarang, here are my plans for the chicken-house. We do need eggs, and I am worried over my thoroughbreds at night." "The bullock-carts aren't free to cart poles now," he answered. "The frame of the cot is finished; where is the rope?" "It will have to be twisted from the raw jute over in that storehouse, but I have no man to do it now."

"Sarang, rats dug through right under our dining table last night. Every building is undermined. It is frightful what they destroy. The sacks of grain in the storehouse have all been riddled and they are all over my food-supplies. Can't we get some traps?" "None to be had nearer than Bhuban, maybe not even there; and I can't spare a man now to go that far; it would take him a whole day."

"Well, then, let some man bring me a basketful of eggplants from Mochapal, and I'll bait the holes with poisoned slices.

"I'll try to spare one tomorrow."

"The white ants have attacked the poles of our tent and covered them in one single night; what can I do?"

"I'll have a man put tarred jute-rope around the bases as soon as I can get around to it."

"It is already impossible to stay in the tent during the middle of the day. Even this house is getting frightfully hot. You would be

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more comfortable if we stretched a leaf-roof between it and the granary."

"Right you are. Hadn't thought of it. Maybe we can get around to it week after next."

Of course I pitched in wherever I could and did not wait for men. Under such stress my diary was almost as much neglected as my sketching. But some notes I was able to jot down.

January 7th, 5.30 P. M.

Am sitting in front of my leaf-enclosure, at my feet a yellow dog who two days ago barked furiously and refused to be friends. Four feet away in a basket of straw a sick puppy; bathed it with my own hands to the disgust and surprise of our *halias,* for to these orthodox Hindus, dogs are untouchable animals.

No time to write till this minute, though we arrived three days ago. Such hectic days,—and my Calcutta friends feared I would find life in the jungle unbearably dull!

The first day I made a *dhoolie* (fly-proof foodbox). "What, Memsahib a carpenter?" the *halias* were heard to say in immense surprise. Its legs stood in water-tins to keep insects off, and it had two shelves and a screened back and door. Yesterday was tent-arranging. A curtain-covered Horlick's milk-box nailed to a roof-post at standing height, with a shaving mirror above it, is our dressing table. Curtains at the leaf-tent door, matting underfoot before the cloth-tent, steamer chairs, a table—quite cozy.

This morning was spent entirely in arranging food-supplies, cleaning bachelor-housekeeping tins first. All things must be kept in tins or *dhoolie* because of rats and insects. From Calcutta we had brought supplies: tinned butter and milk, eggs, cheese, dried fruits, rolled oats, crackers. Californian, English, Dutch, Australian labels in the Indian jungle! What then, when these supplies give out? They cost too much, and nothing whatever is available locally except rice, eggs, pulse, honey, and molasses. One shoe is missing. Dogs? Jackals?

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Sarang is eager to be off to try his gun, I eager to sit down to write. But the servants are squabbling; I must first settle with the cook. Sarang says: "Simply jot down: yesterday first shot: my man one crow, today my man one hawk, midnight frightening noises, my man says only barking deer." At this rate I must already add: "My man tonight one pigeon." Sarang said, "I only saw his head sticking out of the foliage, brought him down dead, two others flew away. If I could keep this enthusiasm, then there wouldn't be this dead lonesomeness." The light of the killer in his eyes! Strange, these men!

Sarang goes off again; I attend to the sick puppy. Under the plank by the granary Bajya has just found a scorpion six and three-quarter inches long; I've put it in alcohol. Now I will settle down to write, I hope.

But Sarang calls across the outer leaf-fence: "Do you hear that sound? That is what you took for the leopard's cry the other night." I listen—a sort of low bark, repeated over and over again.

"No, it isn't. I never heard this one before. The other night it was a much bigger and more powerful call,"

"Well, the high sharp bark which you heard last midnight, that was a large spotted female deer's call. The male calls only once or twice or thrice. The jungle folk say each bark means one year of age. The smaller barking deer you have not yet heard. The one calling now is the Kutura, a small brown deer not more than one and a half feet high. It has the best meat. Came to tell you not to be frightened if I stay too long. I'm off; I'm sure I'll get something tonight." "Don't go alone, you're new at it."

"Narottam is down with fever and can't come. *Halias* are busy cooking. I'll only go near the edge of the jungle."

"Not alone!" I insist.

Off he goes with Bajya and my flashlight.

"I'll be back in an hour; if I get something we'll shout and you send men."

Alone once more, attempting to scribble. It grows completely

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dark in the leaf-tent. Rustling noises everywhere. Men's voices from the bullock house. Three dogs near me. A light bark just now. I'm getting jungle-wise: that is the large deer I heard at dead of night.

Just now another jungle sound, new. Immediately afterwards, three or four shouts. I run out into the open moonlight and call. No answer. I grow uneasy; lighting my lantern I sit down outside, writing, so as to hear better if another sound should come from across the jungle. My dogs, even sick little Ugly, crowd around me.

Just now a shot rings out, wonder what he's got. Whatever he shot at, got away! Sarang comes back disgusted. But I am glad he is back safe!

8.30 P. M. Back from the "dining room" (simultaneously office and food storeroom!)—mud floors and walls, thatched roof; two doors, made of tough twigs woven mat-like over a wooden frame, let in more air than the tiny barred window-frame. Dinner was grand; roasted pigeons, mashed baked egg-plant, *shag*, potatoes, custard pudding, peanut-toffee and chocolate candy. But Calcutta supplies are disappearing. Eat and be merry, for tomorrow we shall have rice and dal!

On the way to dinner I again noticed the *halias* in the open blockade shed. Each one has to cook his own meal after a hard day's work. They cannot bunch together, for their castes differ. The men huddle around the fire, shivering. Evenings are so cold.

I in warm sweater and wool stockings feel chilly. They have but one cotton cloth! Thank God they have limitless wood!

"Why not at least *one* warm room where they can crowd and be warm?"

"No time to finish it; at least thirty men are needed for sugar work," Sarang answers.

"But I feel guilty in warm clothes and a warm room. They are freezing."

"You don't understand. They are used to this life from childhood. If we had wet paddy instead of dry-crops they would still have

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been guarding the paddy on *madhans* in trees all night until two weeks ago, as the other villagers were doing. If none had absented themselves, the men's houses would be finished long ago. Now I must pay outside coolies to build my own *halias'* houses! Lazy unreliable beggars!"

Sarang continues: "Life is too hard here. Even Narottam tells me he will leave soon. He can't keep on cooking his own meals, and his wife won't come and live here. It is too lonesome for her, and there are not sufficient purdah arrangements."

"Why not have him eat with us? He is your nephew. We have a cook."

"Caste fears prevent this; our cook is a Mohammedan, and some food is acceptable from a non-Brahmin cook, some is not," Sarang goes on, unburdening himself. "And now Bajya's father has come. I have asked Bajya why. Money? 'No, he has arranged my marriage.' Bajya's father will want money, a hundred at least for the marriage feast. What fools. Bajya earns eight a month, spends a hundred on one celebration. I can't let him go, can't do without him. I wish they would leave him alone! Bajya's father is always exploiting him, the whole family is, the whole damn caste. Once, during famine, Bajya left his village and went into Sukhinda with his father. At the end of a year they came back with sixty rupees and a cartload of paddy, and their caste immediately threatened to outcaste them on the pretext that they had served *gundas*, unless they performed *praeshchita*. That ceremony and the feast ate up the entire savings. Poor Bajya!

"The condition of lower class villagers is terrible. They are ground between upper castes and untouchables. Upper-caste people at times of ceremonies have at least the right to issue invitations, mostly to relatives. But lower castes—barbers, *dhobies*, potters, weavers, farmers—in the case of these, every person belonging to the same caste comes and attends a feast or ceremony. They are bled white."

Sarang goes on to tell me: "Last year a barber came to buy rice. I asked the local price, a rupee for ten manas. The barber said, 'At Sukhinda I get twelve manas.'

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"Then why don't you go there?"
"'Can't. Even if you gave but four manas per rupee, I must take it.'
"Why?"
"'My caste people have come and want a feast tonight because of a death in my family. If I don't give it, they will; make me a one-house-man. An outcaste, worse than death."

January 10. This morning about ten, a *halia* came running with news while Sarang and I were talking. Stream of words in Oriah. Sarang rushed for his gun and cartridges. "Deer in nearby rice fields." Off he flew, in *dhotie*, bare legs, loose slippers on his feet. A short time afterwards I heard a shot. Then a bit later two more. Five minutes afterwards the *halia* comes running, shouting from a distance. Narottam comes to me; he knows less Hindustani than I Oriah, but I make out that Sarang wants more cartridges. The *halia* rushes off with them and Narottam also goes.

"Wait for me, Narottam!"

Hurriedly I slip on high boots, cobras in mind. Beyond the bullock shed is cut jungle, all timber still lying on the ground. Frightful going. From the *halias* pantomime I make out that a deer was wounded but escaped into the jungle. More *halias* follow me from the houses, overtake me, and are soon out of sight.

At the edge of the jungle Sarang stands, waving his gun. That new toy! As I come near, he says, "Why did you come? You are delaying me. I only waited because I saw you coming."

"Well, I'm going, too!"

We follow the men into the jungle, pushing through undergrowth, face lashed by branches and thorns, dry leaves underfoot. Sarang tells me: "During monsoon all is green new growth. It is absolutely impenetrable then, and good hiding for the deer. But now they are safer outside the jungle. That's why they come into clearings even in daytime. I saw three bucks standing some two hundred feet away in shrubbery and rice, facing me steadily— one turned a little and I shot; at least twenty jumped up and all ran away. Coming near I saw

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a buck lying at the edge of the forest; but he jumped up, staggered, and then was off into the jungle. I fired two more shots; both missed, I think. Here is blood! The *halias* are following the spoor now."

Even the carpenters had run after Narottam and me. "Why did *you* come and leave your work?"

"Memsahib was going. She is new to the jungle. There must be plenty of men to protect her."

The humbugs—wanted some fun and used me as a shield! The *halias* turn enthusiastic faces to Sarang: "We knew from first shot that Babu would now feed us—it killed a crow! What luck!"

Strange sensation, this following of blood-traces on twigs and dry leaves and ground into deep jungle. Found! A huge spotted deer at the foot of a tree. Not yet dead. Frantic struggling to get to its feet at our approach, but it can barely raise its lovely head. Its terror-stricken eyes stab me. "Shoot quick, Sarang, please, please finish!"

"No, don't waste a bullet," Narottam and the *halias* say, and start battering it to death with axes. I turn sick and run, covering my ears to shut out the squashing blows.

Terrible, the jungle, life turned against life, killing, cruelty, death everywhere!

Lunch is ready when the deer, slung over a pole, is brought to the bullock-shed.

"Better get what you want, and have it cut the way you want it, they simply chop it any old way!" Sarang tells me. But the *dhobie* and some villagers are waiting for medicine. That comes first. Every day now a stream of sick comes. Sarang is forced to interpret, a great loss of time for him.

One child less than two years old has fever and convulsions, yet has been carried through the heat. There is no qualified doctor nearer than Dhenkanal. One man has "stomach swelling when eating"; one has "fire coming out of my head"; another tells me, "my woman fire burning all over body"; one shows a frightful skin-itch covering him completely. I dose out Epsom salts, castor oil, quinine, and sulphur. What more can I do?

Half an hour later one man is back for more salts. "Heavenly

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medicine, please, memsahib, more!" Sarang unearths that he swallowed only a third of the dose ordered, is hoarding the rest and wants more to store up "towards evil days" — medicine which is so unbelievably precious in the jungle! After this, all salts will be swallowed in my presence!

Later, when I am standing in the double-width door of the bullock house, a *balia* carrying out the deer-pole, stops dead. Sarang calls out to me, "Step inside."

"Why, he has plenty of room."

"They won't cross a threshold if a superior is standing there."

Some *balias* cut up the deer on a huge pile of green leaves. I look for kidneys and fat, and find the intestines all in another corner on a stretcher under leaves. "Why throw away this nice fat?"

"Don't worry! Nothing will be wasted. Untouchables will eat every scrap. I was told that the other day when we gave the goat-feast, some of them came, took the hide away, burnt off the hair and ate the skin, so famished are they."

The deer is as big as a cow; all our men get a share. Fifty packages are wrapped in large leaves fresh from a tree. Parcels are sent to the Odisso headman, to our *dhobie,* to outsiders. Delight! The news runs like wildfire; we are the only ones for miles with the right to kill. Many come from afar: "Please, just a taste!" "All finished, so sorry." People are mad for meat; their diet is incredibly poor. The majority of villagers have only one meal a day: merely their regular rice and dal; no vegetables except at monsoon time. A chronic state of undernourishment, of gradual starvation exists. The majority cannot even afford to buy salt; it is much too expensive, too highly taxed. Villagers coming from long distances beg eagerly: "Memsahib, just one handful of salt, we can eat rice without it, but meat needs salt."

Always this conflicting aspect: I hate to think deer are killed, but when people are starving, and fields are destroyed, what then? Our *kulti* field, planted last year, was never reaped; it was not worth while because marauding deer had not left enough.

After lunch I want to rest in the tent, but Bulu comes, bloody all

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over. It gives me a frightful shock, but he is not hurt; the brute merely got into the bullock shed and burrowed deep in the bloody leaves on which the deer was cut up. Now I must wash him, the scamp!

Being all messy by now, why try to rest? Might as well smear tar-paint on some wooden blocks to put under our trunks. Just time for that before tea!

No wonder Sarang's *halias* have occasion to gape in amazement at a woman doing man's work, a woman who does not veil her face, wears breeches, and whose face is dead white at that. Now and then some aborigines timidly come to within the protecting corner of the nearest house, ax on shoulder, and bow and arrow in hand, staring at the visible proof of the unbelievable tales of doings at Brahmakunda that have sought them out in their tree-abodes.

Our own *halias*, on the whole, take it all in good part. At first my innovations were a source of everlasting wonder and amusement to them. But when they realized Memsahib meant business, and was indefatigable, and at times—not familiar with existing limitations and taboos—gave orders that went against caste restrictions, there were mutterings.

Discontent also reigns in my kitchen. I plan and measure out food for lunch and dinner. Bajya gives out the rice, spices, *ghee*, and eggs to the cook. I happen upon them in hot argument. Khansama is insisting on "more." I glance at the tray—spices enough to burn our insides—in other words, enough for the Mohammedan men! There is strain between Bajya and Khansama; Bajya, mere boy of eighteen, trusted favorite of and indulged by his master; Khansama, old-seasoned Mohammedan, now wanting to lord it. I must step in or there will never be peace. I reduce the spices on the platter by fully two-thirds.

Then I go behind the houses and watch the carpenters. They have finished my bed, four posts held together on top by four strong strips of wood. A special man has come yesterday, a bed-stringer. With

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ropes made on the spot out of jute he weaves a very complicated pattern back and forth, lengthwise and across the frame; very slow, very ingenious. It takes him a whole two days to string one cot. The carpenters are busy on a large table; I want it for Sarang's papers and writing. How very slow it all moves; some distance away, under trees, there are men busy sawing up tree-trunks into planks. The trunk rests on the ground with one end; the other is raised on a trestle high in the air. One man stands up there on the trunk, the other is below on the ground, and between them, up and down, up and down, goes the saw, while another man stands near each of these, to fetch and carry. They have been doing this for weeks. And from these rough boards the carpenters are making the furniture, quite rude, of course. No nails—wooden pegs serve the purpose. To make the holes for these, a sharp-pointed instrument attached to a wooden handle is caught in a moving string, and it takes two men to twirl this—two men, and some minutes, to make one hole in a plank.

Of course, my Western impatience awakes; it is all so stupid. I go over to my tent, fetch my new American tools, my steel screws, and show them how to use my auger with merely one hand. Amazement. I hand it to them; they take it reluctantly. The work goes on, much faster now, but I sense discontent. The next morning no carpenters, unfinished work lying about. The next, again no one. We send to inquire. They will not come again, to be taught by a woman, and to use tools she has handled. Sarang looks annoyed, but says nothing.

"How could I have fathomed that my simple action could work such havoc?"

"Didn't you know they actually worship their tools?"

I am constantly running my head against stone walls, and friction is as constantly the result.

For consolation I go to my chickens, and my dogs scamper around. Ugly and Bulu always look so annoyed when I go into the newly finished chicken house and shut the door in their faces. Hurrah, one chicken is sitting! At once I slip under it the saved-up Chittagong eggs.

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For lunch cook serves us a tasteless, unseasoned curry. Spite-work. I made no remark; but noon next day finds me in the kitchen, with Khansama. I sit on a low stool and watch operations. Bajya was told to give out exactly the same amount and kind of spices as I gave instructions for the preceding day—three cloves, some haldi, a bit of tamarind, a bit of garlic, a green chili, a bayleaf, a pinch of *dhania*, black pepper-corns. Khansama is to grind them on the curry stone in front of me, fry them and let me taste, so there will never again be argument over this point. For I do not want to be bothered myself daily to hand out all these things; Bajya can do it just as well. Khansama squats on the floor, places all these condiments on a flat stone, adds a sprinkle of water—much water all around and a great ado of cleanliness meant to impress me!—and grinds and grunts away. Lovely smell! Saucepan with *ghee* on open fire, he drops the soft spicy paste into it. Ravishing fumes! Stirs a while, then adds a bit of water.

Squatting on the floor, he takes my big new imported kitchen-knife, slants it upwards on a bit of wood, holds it firmly between his toes—and behold, my best English steel knife develops undreamed-of tendencies, and becomes the good old *"paniki"* or *"bonti,"* the tool used throughout India for centuries. On this he deftly slices the last of my deer-meat into even cubes, holding it between two hands, far more evenly and quickly than I could do it in my own way. Why not? I have given up long ago to try to make my servants do such things my way. If efficiency is the criterion, his way is better than mine, even if floor and toes come into use.

Before I leave the kitchen, I taste the curry—excellent, well-seasoned, too much so, if anything. I go without a word. I know there will be no more argument about spices.

This night Sarang is busy with overseers, and books. Narottam has been with him for one year, but is leaving tomorrow. Sarang wonders how on God's earth he'll manage alone, yet no substitute can be found. Every night the many outside coolies have to be paid off, records kept, and our own *halias'* presence checked up. The young

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nephew has done this until now; from today on it falls on Sarang's shoulders, Sarang who even before this rarely got to sleep before ten at night, though up at dawn. He looks very weary, sitting on the edge of the narrow mud-veranda, leaning his back against a rough tree-trunk pillar. The record book is on his lap, a big pile of copper money at his side, and tonight forty-five villagers crowd around waiting to be paid of. For the thatching work on fourteen new two-room huts this unusually large number of peasants has been engaged. They are anxious to get away to their villages as soon as possible, for night is coming on; but paying off and record-keeping is slow work.

"I am going to the tent," I say to Sarang.

"Will you be all right? Hadn't you better stay over here at the house? The men have heard bears nearby this evening."

"But I want to write letters, and I can't do so with all the noise of these men around here settling up."

"Yes, I know, but only a few weeks ago two bears were fighting just beyond the bullock house. Worst noise I ever heard. One was defeated and ran away; the larger chased it. It dodged here and there, and finally ran right towards the men's open cookhouse. They are terrors when they are roused, and the men fear them more than tigers. The *halias* were cooking their meal; they snatched up burning logs, brandished and threw these with shouts. The bears were blind with rage, but swerved away and disappeared in the jungle behind these storehouses. After all, you'd better stay here; one never knows."

But I decide for the tent, though that seems very far away and very unprotected, and call my dogs to accompany me. There I sit down in front of the looped-back flaps to write. Strange, how both the silence and the noises grow! I hear sounds I am familiar with by now, and others break forth which I still don't know and consequently fear. The bullock house is nearest to me; it is strong, safe, made like a stockade with a sort of inner roofed-over veranda running along the four sides for protection in the rains. The center of the shed is open to the sky and there the bullocks sleep all huddled together. The buffaloes are in separate stalls on the fourth side; they are too savage; it is hot safe to let

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them loose. Around the outside of the shed the leopards often circle at night, with angry baffled snufflings—such lovely dinners so near and yet so far!

Just now I hear the bullocks snort and stamp about alarmed, and the voices of the four men who sleep at guard sound rough yet quieting, "ho-ho, ho, ho, ho!" It is a comfort to know them nearer to me than the men at the houses.

Brownie, who stayed behind near the other houses, has repeatedly started a shrill, high barking. Puppy here at the entrance to my leaf-tent has answered each time, but for the last ten minutes has kept up a continuous barking and growling. Such a curious growling as I've never heard from her before—low, warning, angry. She is the one experienced jungle dog among my four. The jungle seems to have drawn still nearer and speaks insistently. After all, there is no more solid thing between me and it than a pair of wine-colored curtains, half drawn, blowing in the breeze at the entrance to my leaf-tent. The leafy low fence outside, twenty feet away, is for privacy, not for protection.

Dread of the jungle suddenly overwhelms me as Puppy breaks out into a sudden burst of furious barking that is followed by abrupt silence. I call to her, but she does not answer, nor does she come. Bulu stands at my knee, trembling, tense, staring in the direction of the noise, but remains silent. I give up writing and slip into bed, unwashed and unshriven, for the opening in the back towards the tiny bath-tent outside seems like incredibly black, wide-open jungle jaws! I cannot walk through them.

Hanging on the post outside, my lantern burns faintly; against my bed-post rests the loaded gun. What good it would do me, I am not quite sure, for I have never fired one. But it gives me courage to know it there. Dear old Bulu lies at my feet, the fat, sleek, white, lazy darling. I'm treacherous: I love him—but there is comfort in remembering that leopards love him, too, and consequently might condescend to overlook me for this night. When Sarang came over at eleven o'clock, I woke up. "Where is Puppy?" I asked, for I had made the habit of tying her to one of the posts near my tent to

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prevent her from returning to her old care of the houses, and force her to guard the tent instead.

"Isn't she here? I thought you had taken her."

"I did, but she barked and must have run off." Sarang stepped outside and called her, but to our amazement she did not come. He hid his concern from me; for here in the jungle dogs have at last managed to break through his Hindu aversion and creep into his heart! We went to sleep, Sarang still on his hard plank-bed—for the carpenters never returned to finish his— but rejoicing over my having the comfort of a new rope-cot. We woke up thoroughly refreshed, in time to set our watches by sunrise: 6.32.

But our spirits fell when we found Puppy nowhere. At noon the buffalo herder brought us her bleeding skull from the edge of the jungle.

Sick at heart, I could not rise out of a deep depression that day. All the discouraging aspects trooped into my mind. By evening I was fussing and fretting once more because of the conditions in which our *halias* live in their open shed. I persuaded Sarang, much against his will, to give at least some heavy gunny sacks to the freezing men. He is disgusted and hardened because of one year's dealings with these irresponsible primitives. Work doesn't progress. While Sarang was away for over six weeks they slacked in everything and absented themselves most of the time, and the supervisors were helpless. Their two-room houses therefore are started, but not finished, though even outside coolies are employed. And now they are suffering bitterly from the cold, and from the continued absence of their wives. Today, out of thirty, only a dozen men were on duty. This reduced number makes it absolutely impossible to spare any now for further building. A vicious circle.

A supervisor comes; the men have refused to accept the sacks. Not enough! He has locked them up again in the storeroom. I heard him viciously snap out the order; he had, as had Sarang, protested against the idea from the first.

I feel unhappy, inside my tent and warm blankets, thinking of the

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men's discomfort. What if they are cheats and rogues and slackers? Life has not given them any inducement to be otherwise. Their pay is seven cents a day, roughly, and some of that is given out in rice grown here. Even this is one cent higher than almost anyone else pays. Sarang tells me it is impossible to pay much more than the average of the district's wages without disorganizing everything. I realize it all, partly at least, and Sarang gets more and more irritated over my "criticizing," but I feel so unhappy about it.

The men are subsisting on rice and dal. They save all they can to send to their families. As salt is excessively expensive, often they have not even enough of that. Only of late, because of Sarang's gun and my garden, do they get a bit of meat or some eggplants now and then. But at least they have two meals a day, while the majority of villagers about here have but one.

If only our means were not so limited, our undertaking less hard! Sixteen thousand rupees gone already in development, in purchase of implements, bullocks, buffaloes, and in buildings, and yet not a piece of modern machinery on the place except that American stump-puller that won't pull! And no comfort for the men—nor much for ourselves.

I surmise I would have started with buildings, with irrigation-works, and a very small plot of really cleared land first. Sarang says no—unless the many men see large paddy fields, food for themselves, they will not feel safe and will not be happy. They cannot vision nor plan years ahead as we do. I suppose he is right. Yet why fifty bullocks that cost so much, at the very start, when hardly half are actually used? There are reasons! I keep quiet; it is true, I do not understand, and have so often failed to take essential local conditions into consideration. But I have back of me a knowledge of farming in Switzerland and in America, and out of this springs impatience with Indian ways and drawbacks. Unfair impatience, no doubt, but not the less troubling.

I've reverted to these things, oh, so many times under so many guises that Sarang has become touchy on the point. He reminds me of my

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first brilliant psychological experiment with my Bombay servants, and asks will I ever learn. In desperate discontent I think *no*, there are some things I never wish India to teach me! I know, I know; I've learned that one can hardly ever trust anyone here, servants or coolies—yet there it is: underfed men freezing half the night and getting up at four or five in the morning, to rouse their fires, because it is physically impossible for them to bear the cold any longer, no matter how much they need their sleep!

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

One whole week had passed since my arrival at the plantation before I found occasion to take a ride over our lands. There had been so much to do around the houses. Even now I had to force the opportunity. Late in the afternoon, Sarang told me he wanted to go hunting at Mochapal, our garden-place across the river that I had not yet seen. Deer were nightly destroying our lucerne, sweet potatoes, and corn.

"Will you be afraid to sleep here alone?"

"Sleep alone? No, thanks! Bajya must sleep near me, here on the mat under the tent veranda if you stay away."

"That will be too cold for him."

"Too cold? If it is too cold for him, then what about the *halias* sleeping without any protection whatever in that open shed?"

This had already become a mooted point between us; Sarang evaded discussion by going for his bath. Indeed, I won't sleep here alone, I decided, and like a flash I slipped into my riding suit. Then I went over to the houses and started packing a shack of food for his supper.

"What, you are going?" Sarang exclaimed when he saw me.

"Yes," I said nonchalantly, "I'll just ride over to have a look at the place. It's time I saw my garden. Moreover, I've earned an outing. I've mended at least one hundred stockings and shirts today."

"I do wish you would not go; it will be dark before you can get back, and the road lies through jungle."

"I won't stay but a minute; I'll come back at once with some of your men," I assured him. Reluctantly Sarang gave in, and we were off. A twisting footpath led at first in and out along the edges of fields and around the stumps of trees the whole length of our clearing. Then we swerved towards the left, entered a stretch of jungle, and came out into a natural small glade. Rosy-tipped grass covered the ground; in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun it glowed like a ruby in its emerald setting of huge, vine-covered trees.

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Birds called, and darted about like red, blue and yellow flashes of lightning.

Sarang turned to me. "This is the glade where I saw dozens of peacocks turning their wheels one monsoon morning."

My pony picked out its footing surely and carefully among ruts and rain-washed ridges. White ant heaps towered twice my height here and there, a red gleam through green trees. These heaps, scarred into columns by the rains, and often overgrown with plants, are a most fantastic jungle decoration, castles of the unseen, powerful, inexorable enemy.

Suddenly the earth dipped and it was rough riding, sliding down a steep path intersected with tree-roots between which the rains had washed the earth away. Underneath a huge banyan with spreading branches we reached the banks of the river, our river— the water for all our land. Deep-cut dry creeks branch out from it in all directions, which were foaming torrents during monsoons; but the river itself never runs dry. Just a little farther down Sarang pointed out to me a dip in the tree-covered bank—a deep path worn down to the water's edge by the jungle beasts in their nightly quenching of thirst. Tracks of deer, of elephant, of leopard and tiger.

After fording the river, we reached a large clearing. This was Mochapal, the spot where Sarang planned to plant his first cane. Work had already started on the building of an earthen dam.

"Why on earth didn't you build your houses here?" I exclaimed, for the place was very beautiful, nestled in the circle of magnificent jungle, washed by the river, and with rising ground at one end. "When you could have built here, why did you build on the flat, bare plain so far away from water?"

Sarang was already getting a bit tired of my many "why did you? why didn't you?"

"Danger of floods, and too far away," he said shortly. I kept silent, but measured the slope with my eyes. Water would have to rise at least ten feet to sweep over that ground! As for its being too far away from the cartroad, some day we would have our own roads.

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A straight line from here to the plantation houses could not be much farther than half a mile. The site for our permanent house had not yet been decided upon, but Sarang hoped to be able to build during the coming summer, if carpenters could be procured again. They would have to be brought from the distance of a day's journey this time, not easy to arrange.

"Oh, Sarang, do let us build the house here, up on those rocks in sight of the river and near the trees!"

"That is impossible," he said. "I have started over there now, and I cannot shift."

"But you say none of those houses last more than three years; the white ants destroy them all within that length of time. So when you rebuild, why not do it here?"

"And waste an hour going back and forth meanwhile! The bullock house is over there; that is the most important consideration."

"But couldn't we cut a road through in a straight line? Then it would take not more than fifteen minutes," I said with assurance, for I have a very keen sense of direction. "Our houses must lie directly over there," I pointed, "and we came way around here."

"I have no men to spare for cutting roads, and anyway, it is out of the question," Sarang said with finality.

I kept silent for the time, planning to look into the matter more carefully and return to it later. I felt the main difference was that Sarang had built naturally with all senses alert to greatest initial utility: choosing the site nearest Odisso village, though it was poor; while I looked on the building of the living house in the light of a woman's permanent home. He would be out in the fields a great deal of the time; but most of my days would be spent in the house. And I, who so loved beauty and flowers, how would I be able to stand that flat, unshaded ugliness, knowing that here was all heart could desire of a building site.

"Come and see your garden," Sarang said. A few hundred yards away at the edge of the clearing there was a hut and beyond it "my garden." For it was truly mine, though I had never seen it. I had

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kept on pestering my husband in letters to have a garden planted. He was doing without vegetables, which I considered a mistake. Grudging the labor, which he preferred to use on the large crops, he finally consented. Manohar planted it, riding daily one and a half miles to supervise. (Manohar was a Hindu college boy who joined Sarang, but left after a few months, unable to endure the harshness of jungle life.) They could not plant it near the house, for watering would have been impossible. I, from a distance, had not understood these difficulties; it had seemed madness to live in the country without vegetables.

Now I understood. It took two *halias* to stay there always and care for the plot, not only to water, but also to guard during the night, as there were no fences. What good are fences against elephants? Just imagine it, a little garden plot in the wilderness: on two sides thick jungle, on one the clearing, on the fourth the river edged by shrubs and trees, with more jungle beyond and the nearest village miles away.

My little garden! A strange sight: monkeys and deer had destroyed half the sproutings. Watering had been neglected. The very day we reached the plantation, one week ago, it had been resumed. In the center of this garden, one large circle intersected by raised footpaths in the form of a cross—my flowerbed! A few scraggly zinnias bravely putting forth buds, and just a single one in bloom, a scarlet blossom! I felt a bit choky—two lonely men's brave attempt to welcome me in the midst of the jungle with blossoms they knew I loved so—my garden, like all the rest of it showing the heroic effort needed to master all this wildness and beautiful desolation.

Near the flowers some Indian corn, bravely started, and then ruined through negligence; some beds of lucerne, sweet potatoes, and "English" vegetables, these beds more than half empty. Then half an acre of eggplant, also suffering from lack of water but bravely reviving after this last watering. A few ripe peas, some eggplants ripening—not a bad beginning; now that we are here and water will be abundantly supplied, there is some hope that we'll have vegetables

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soon at dinner, if only we can come to terms with bears, monkeys, deer, wild boars, and elephants. I'll be grateful to them if they leave me one-third of the produce.

At the edge of my garden there is a tiny leaf-hut and in this one man in turn keeps watch each night with a blunderbuss and noisy vessels to scare away the beasts, but I have an idea he is the most scared of all.

At the far end of the eggplant section, on the twelve-foot high riverbank, an opening is cut through the shrubbery to the water. There the waterlift is installed, a rig made up of slender tree trunks holding aloft a long pole at one end of which swings a bucket, while at the other end hangs a weight of mud in a basket. A pull on this latter will raise a bucketful of water which is then emptied into a channel made of a hollow tree-trunk, and leads off into the many ditches throughout the garden. There, at intervals, round pits are dug where the water accumulates, and from these men carry it to parts where the channeling does not reach. We have just now arranged to have a Persian waterwheel sent, an endless bucket-chain, power to raise this supplied by a bullock, which, blindfolded, will circle and circle around the well. As soon as it comes we shall turn that whole clearing into a canefield, although everyone advises against it because of the great number of wild beasts, but we have great faith in our very new gun, and hope to put the fear of god into the enemies of cane.

After a few minutes of inspection of the garden I had convinced my husband that it was easier to send the horse, for which there was no night-shelter anywhere here, back home to its stable than me to the lonesome tent. I was determined to stay. Just one last protest: "You better come and look at the pallah before you send the men away!" I did look. Between the river and one corner of the garden a huge mass of branches of large trees, some smaller whole trees and thorny shrubs had been piled up when the ground was cleared. Into the edge of this, on the bare ground, the men had constructed a hiding-place, at most five feet high and four feet square. The roof and three inner walls were formed by the dried pile of dead branches and leaves, the outer was made of freshly cut branches with all their leaves, and with

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three loopholes and gunrests cleverly hidden. I crawled in and looked around. "Fine! I can comfily start housekeeping here." "But it is made for only two." "Well, we can enlarge it a bit towards the back." "It is very hard to clear space in that tangled mass and we don't want to make much noise so late today." The sun was indeed at that moment setting in glory over the jungle.

"I'm sure we can do it." I'm always sure in such matters, and everyone always tells me it can't be done. I know of only one form of effective argument: I started at once to force back some big branches and held them in place by an upright one. "All right, all right, come out of there!" calls Sarang, who does not like to see his Memsahib do heavy work before his men—which I know so well and on which I bank! Two men crawled in and in a few minutes' time completed the job, cleaned the ground, and behold, a pallah that easily held three!

Sarang is a great hunter, but he forgot a light! So the two men who are sent back with the horse have orders to come again bringing our flashlight, a lantern, another blanket, dry woolen stockings for me. Bulu, too, must go! We have doubts as to his hunting ability, though none whatever of our own. Has Sarang not already done such a lot of shooting with the brand-new gun—to wit, one crow, one hawk, three pigeons, one deer, and two pariah dogs, not to mention the shots aimed at targets?

I am all aglow over the new adventure ahead of me. Sarang shows me hundreds of footprints of deer in the soil where it had been watered, then takes me to the river. We stand above on the high embankment. Clear green water swirls down below, gets caught in a pool, leaving flecks of foam in the overhanging and trailing vines. The other edge of the river is six feet lower, flatly sloping up into dark jungle from a tiny beach of small pebbles where animals surely come to drink at night. A beautiful place for tigers to lie in wait.

Night is fast falling as we retrace our steps to the tiny hut. In front of it a little lad is stirring his father's rice in a large earthen pot over an open fire. The *halia* makes his report: "Deer come almost every night into the garden." "Tigers?" He smiles, "At the water; not here, we

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have not seen His Highness here." That smile hides fear; they do not like Sarang's foolhardiness of calling the lord of the jungle familiarly by his name when night is falling!

We crawl into the pallah while a bit of light remains. I start housekeeping: four sacks on the floor, then on second thought the pile of newspaper in which our sweater and blanket were wrapped goes under the sacking for extra warmth. On third thought they come out again; they crackle too noisily. Blanket spread, cartridges laid ready to my hand, for I am to be assistant. Dinner and waterflask handy. Sarang gives his instructions. "Whatever you do, no noise, no talking. Only nudging and pointing. When you see me point my gun, turn your flashlight, fixed for long distance, in its direction. If you don't spot the deer, sweep it close over the ground in a large circle."

Easy enough. All ready.

Sarang has on two sweaters, and takes an extra one. I slip his sleeveless one under my own, my lovely Paris sweater with its two vermilion buttons!

"Shall we eat now?" Sarang asked.

"No, not hungry."

"Then you can't eat till morning. No light permitted."

"Oh, yes, I can, I can find everything in the dark."

We settle down to watch. Pitch dark. A wild cock crows, peacocks shrill, monkeys call. Somewhere far off a buck barks. Distant faint drum-roll from some village: man-sounds, and still others: from; our own *halias* settling down in their hut some hundreds of yards away. The tiny house in the garden is empty; the man was ordered away out of gun-reach. My watch stopped at noon; Sarang forgot his at the house. I set mine by guess at six-thirty, for it seems to me it has already been dark for so very long, and darkness falls at six or earlier. Sarang lights a pipe; time passes.

We grow anxious about our men who have to cross the jungle to return to us. What if they should be attacked? "No, no," Sarang assures me, "no man-eater about here for the last few years." A rustling in the dead shrubs behind us; he lights a match: nothing visible.

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At last, faint human sounds, and a flash of light. Two men with a lantern come quietly into the clearing and up to our pallah. A large bundle is handed in, and one man crawls in after. The other disappears towards the hut.

I open the bundle, and smile. Bajya's idea of what a mad Mem-sahib, who crazily insists on staying out in the jungle, would need: two white pillows, one sheet, one white flannelette blanket used as sheet in the cold tent, two more rugs, one pair of thin silk stockings.

Hours pass, it grows colder and colder.

I dig out another of my sacks to give to the *halia* as a covering. I feel piggish, wrapped up warm in two sweaters and blankets while he sits there in only a cotton wrapper. Yet I cannot *lend* him anything; it isn't done. Anything given to a servant or lower caste cannot be retaken, and I have none to spare for good.

Toward nine o'clock a buck barks off to the right very near, moves away further and further. My imagination is at highest tension, and God knows it is vivid enough even at ebb tide. All the weirdness and might of the forest crowd round me. Cave instinct: I am glad even for the silly leaf protection between me and the strange night.

Moonrise. Sky clear and light, trees etched against it with sharp masterstrokes. It is not full moon, yet everything is flooded with light, ridges of sweet-potatoes just before us, shrubs, here and there, the small hut, and beyond, the black jungle. More intense watching now under the moon. The rustling sound behind us, to our right, is repeated, nearer. *Halia* whispers "only *musa*"—mice. Hope he knows what he is whispering about! He, unconcerned, settles down to sleep.

I grope for lunch and give Sarang some deer meat and unwrap crackers from oiled paper. It crackles as if it could be heard a mile away. Our own chewing of crackers, too, sounds as if it would bring all the beasts of the forest near. A few sips of water. I am very cold, and mosquitoes are thick. Then I settle down to sleep, but am far too excited, too awake to all the mysterious uninterpreted sounds. *Halia* said that deer would not come now till towards morning. At midnight we wake him up, tell him to watch, and Sarang puts his head on my

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knee to go to sleep. A minute later the *halia* snores. What watchers, these men! No wonder my vegetables disappear! I rouse Sarang. "You must make him keep awake. He has rested and slept for some hours." A few whispers in Oriah. The *halia* sits up, but a minute afterwards is again asleep. I, too, doze fitfully, but start up wide-awake at every new sound.

Once I whisper to Sarang, "What is that, you hear?" A sort of throaty growl nearby. "Elephant somewhere near," he answers sleepily. I listen tensely, and hear it again. "I don't believe it!" But Sarang has already dozed off.

I, too, doze, perhaps, though subconsciously my senses remain alert. Something rouses me. I sit up, straining—a faint sound, more the sense than the sound of approach, nearer, nearer. My throat closes; I touch Sarang. "Don't you hear?" He sits up, listens. My eyes are glued to the central peephole. Suddenly to my right, over the rising ground of sweet-potato ridges, in the dark shadow of a huge tree, I see a still darker shape. A sharp movement and a whisper from me brings Sarang to his knees with a little click of his gun. Instantly the dark shape leaps back. Now it turns under the tree. Its front paws must be on the ridge, the eyes gleam towards us with a sharp yellow light. A throaty rumble, threatening. Those eyes burning into mine, never wavering. Sarang peers through his loophole, in the other direction. "Here, here, that animal, don't you see it? What is it?" He sees, and even his whispered answer conveys to me his immense surprise and fear. "'A tiger!" I shake uncontrollably with cold, terror and excitement. My God, we on the ground, without protection, only wilting leaves between us! And Sarang merely an amateur hunter! The awfulness of our foolhardiness!

The animal so near to us, eight yards at most, turns sideways, after interminable motionless glaring, and glides along the bottom between two high ridges of sweet-potatoes; a foot or more of smooth back, a long, lithe body—too dark to see more.

"My God, another!" I whisper to Sarang as one more shape leaps a ridge, stares towards us for minutes, for ages. Breathless moments. A

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thought—was it a prayer?—"death or deliverance, let either be quick, quick!" I notice that Sarang beside me is shaking like myself. "Fire, fire into the air to scare them away." "Wait, wait, it may be dangerous." "Stay motionless," whispers the *halia.* We trust him blindly; though no hunter, he knows more of the jungle than we. More throaty grumbling, then the second shape too drops back into the hollow between the ridges, and the animals pass slowly away towards the left, but we still hear their growl. "Shall we try to reach the hut?"

"No, I am sure they've gone to drink and will repass here."

Low grumbling some hundred yards away.

"How far is the hut? Farther than the river?"

"Much farther." I have a vision of our attempting the dash and being torn down from behind. No, I prefer the silly leaf-screen before me. How I long to have any kind of real walls around me!

"Fire, and then shout; your men will come!"

"They may not."

Sarang's throat is swallowing dryly, and all at once I laugh inwardly as I watch him, for just the previous evening, at deepening dusk, while showing me our spring, the Brahmakunda, I had been a bit afraid of the dark edge of the forest, but he affirmed he never felt fear here in the jungle. He had explained to me what one must do when meeting His Highness. "You simply stop like this," he acted the part, "and keep on staring at the tiger. He will threaten, growl, take a leap here and there. You keep on turning, always facing him, and finally he will go away."

You simply keep on turning, turning—yes, but maybe inside the tiger's stomach! I whisper laughingly, "I thought you were never afraid!"

Sarang gives a tiny snort, "Only on your account!"

I've stopped shivering and am absolutely calm all at once, though we still hear renewed grumbling. The animals returning? Maybe, maybe not. I feel a sure conviction there will be no danger. We remain listening tensely. Their last sound dies away. I look at the watch in a flicker of filtering moonlight, just twenty to three. Ten minutes probably since they passed, though it seems ages. Shall we make for

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the hut now? We ask the *halia.* "No, why?" Twenty minutes later he is again sound asleep back of us. An hour after the tigers had passed, Sarang, too, announces he is sleepy, but I am frightfully awake. "Don't you dare go to sleep and leave me alone!" We were sitting back to back, for support and warmth, I still watching tensely through the loophole. His body sags and a change of breathing tells me he has dozed off. I push slightly, and he wakes up for a minute. Each time I hear a new sound from somewhere, I push; dozing—push; dozing—push. Immediately back of us, once, a curiously human cough—sharper push. "You *must* stay awake!"

Far off, snarling growls and furious fighting. What jungle tragedy? Some deer bark shrilly. Screams, and once queer laughter-like sounds. How the still jungle-night talks, talks, falls tales, whispers tragedies!

I grow tired of nudging, and take pity. "Lie down for a while. I'll watch."

Sarang does so, and in another minute I and the jungle are alone; awake and alone together. The immensity and awful grandeur of it! [That hour was too big for fear, and will live in my memory forever.]

I strain my eyes for a sign of day—everywhere only this cold flood of endless moonlight, so friendly, so inimical, so treacherous, so distant and intangible.

Suddenly the jungle fills with sound, peacocks crying from tree to tree. Five o'clock by my watch. Terror-inspiring sounds die out, the birds start singing, doves coo—dawn is near!

At last! A human cough from the direction of the hut! The blessedness of man-sound! Bitterly cold, our *halias* get up to rouse stiffened limbs about three to four every morning. On the horizon I perceive a paling, and feel assured. Now I, too, lie down after my lonely watch.

When I awake again, day has really come, comforting, cheery day, though still faint. I fling blankets away and in the pale light go out to look for footprints. Just where I saw the tigers, the dry earth of the ridges is broken down but is too crumbly to keep imprints. In the hollow I can detect no mark, for there the earth is literally polished

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smooth by the bare feet of the men using it constantly as a path to the garden.

Our *halia* goes across to the hut where the half dozen men are just rousing. He comes back: "They heard no tiger though they stayed awake a long time listening for your shot. But they saw a *sambar* standing at the edge of the jungle for some time and later two boars, and wondered why Babu did not shoot!"

Sarang looked at the men a bit indignantly and with a wry smile. Fully confident I said, "Those two were *not* boars. They were too long, too lithe. There may have been boars, however, and the low grumbles we heard half an hour after the tigers passed may have come from them." I continued looking for footprints. Everywhere except in some lately watered beds the earth was too crumbly to guard prints. We found many, the pony's, Bulu's, deers', jackals', but never a tiger's (to their satisfaction) nor a boar's (to mine). In one place only I found triumphantly two prints distinctly too big for jackal or such low breed; the *halias* admitted they might be panther or wolf. Anyway, if they would not have it tiger, then at least panther suited me better than boar! I laughed, "I don't care; whatever it was, we had a full tiger's worth of thrill and scare!"

On the underside of the sheet I had spread on the ground, white ants during a few hours had printed paths and patterns, little clayey tunnels. Out of the empty guncase I fished the forgotten peanut-taffy—our very last from Calcutta—and munched it in the delight of the rising sun. Sarang broke the one scarlet flower and offered it to me, and off we started, to get back to coffee and warmth. Just at the river's edge we saw one *halia* stumbling wildly down the embankment opposite, leading the exited pony to take me across. A few minutes before, he had run across a large black bear, and bears, "the drunkards," are feared worse than tigers.

Home through the rosy sparkling morning, gameless hands and empty stomach, defeated, ashamed, yet proud. Incredible in this flood of light and joyous birdsong to realize the dread the dark night had held! Persistently in the jungle, to our right, a buck kept on calling—rubbing it in, the brute!

"*Khansama*, make *six* cups of coffee quick!"

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

February 2, 5.30 P. M.

The sun is sinking over the plain beyond the jungle's rim. "Aho, aho-aho, ho, ho," ... a rumble of hoofs, breaking of shrubs, rustling grass, dust rising—the bullocks are returning under the herder from grazing in the jungle. No casualties. Not one of our bullocks or buffaloes, nor a single one of our men has been hurt by a wild beast during the whole past year. But yesterday morning two bullocks were killed near Odisso. The tiger, disturbed at the kill, did not return to feed on them, but killed a young buffalo last evening at the edge of the clearing in sight of the village and dragged the carcass into the undergrowth.

The *dhobie* brought my washing today—all yellow, as he has no clear water and no bluing. Also unironed; there is no iron in all these villages. But what if I must wear such clothing? That no longer counts. But it does count to see a grown man crying in hopeless discouragement: one of the bullocks killed belonged to *dhobie;* it was his only one and means the savings of years gone. He may never be able to buy another.

At five this morning we went out hunting. We had scattered grain-bait for jungle cocks. Just as we swung from our houses into the main cart-road we saw huge tracks in the dust, the widest spread of my fingers just barely covered the mark of one paw, a twelve-foot tiger. The tracks were fresh, crossed by no cartwheel; he must have passed within an hour. I followed the spoor fascinated for a long distance. How majestically even, unperturbed— Lord of our jungle, indeed! These paw-marks that pass our houses strangely make him a hundred times more real than the news of the cattle killing. Thank heaven, not a man-eater! Narottam told me that some years ago in his own village one single tiger killed fifty-seven people. No one dared to leave home any more after nightfall, and even in daytime people went about in groups, not singly.

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Sarang has just gone off with his gun and a dozen villagers from Odisso who have brought news of more cattle killing and begged him to come and try to bag the tiger. I objected.

"Sarang! You haven't experience enough to go after a tiger!" "It's all right, they have built a *machan* in a tree. I am the only man with a gun; I cannot refuse their appeal. We'll be safe, don't worry." I can see that he is eager to go, and he does have a marvelous eye. But just at the last moment he came back, and handed me a key:

"Here is the key to the safe. You had better keep it." It struck a chill. Why should he do that, if he were sure there is no danger? Suddenly I am afraid. I won't go to the tent all alone; I'll wait here at the house, near the *halias.*

At midnight a big turmoil: Sarang is being escorted home by a dozen villagers with torches and axes. The tiger is still ranging. It is frightful. The villagers are not allowed to carry arms, and are without adequate defense from the jungle!

Some days later.

Sarang has fallen in love and taken a second wife. Solidly married to his gun! The craze has him; he has neglected the plantation work for the last few days and knows it. But he says there is only one hunting-honeymoon and it is fleeting, while the plantation will keep.

"You really have marvelous luck!" He snorts: "No, a wonderful hand and eye!" He did not get the tiger; cattle-killing, though, has stopped in the neighborhood. However, he brought home a fine boar. The herd had been wallowing in the mud of a drying-up pond, the ground looked as if freshly plowed. Fine meat, but I was disappointed—not one ounce of fat. I am told they have too hard a time to get at roots during the dry season.

Then he has shot one bear, a very close call. He had gone after deer late one evening, waiting with another man in a pallah on the ground. This pallah was made by drawing the branches of a drooping bush down low and interweaving them with other freshly

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cut branches. Instead of deer, a bear came to the edge of the clearing—much too near for comfort. In the uncertain light, before the moon was up, and being on unprotected ground, Sarang had no intention of shooting it. They kept breathlessly quiet. But the bear must have scented them, and instead of turning away, came straight toward the pallah. To the last minute Sarang hoped that somehow he would turn away. Finally, in sheer necessity, he fired, for by now the bear was within four feet. The brute roared, rose straight up and rolled over backward. Sarang and his companion bolted like a flash back out of the pallah and home. Next morning they found the bear, still living but with its nose blown away, and finished him.

I am becoming less frightened of the jungle, though more aware of its death-dealing qualities.

Bears are a nuisance these days. The waxy bell-shaped flowers of a certain tree have started dropping to the ground and the bears are mad after the sweet-tasting dainty. One does not dare go near those trees. The only six-foot man on our place is Ghond, a lazy fellow who was engaged largely because he said, "Master, I am the only man hereabouts who dares go through the forest alone at night. I am never afraid of the jungle." Well, the other night he delayed until late dusk to fetch his cooking water from the bund. The other *halias* heard big shouting, and ran up just in time to see him dashing home with a bear at his heels. The bear turned off into the jungle, but Ghond fainted dead away at the corner of the smithy.

This evening a runner brought mail. Some friend has sent me Henry Ford's biography! It took the book two weeks to reach me from Calcutta, two hundred miles as the crow flies! I wish it had taken longer! Have dipped into it, but have put it aside. Efficiency?—oh, Lord! Ford-advice, in the jungle, without Ford-millions! I would like to see how far it would get him here!

February 15.

Tonight at dusk Bajya came barefoot and without a light from the

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houses, and saw a snake at the entrance to my leaf enclosure— saw it just in time to leap aside. Last year Sarang sat in the steamer chair in his room, writing to me. His feet were tucked under him, a lantern behind him. In came Bajya with another lantern. "Babu, don't move!" he whispered tensely. Sarang sat stone-quiet. Bajya flashed away, came back with a stick and killed a koit by the side of the chair. Koits are more deadly than cobras.

I rode to Mochapal today. We are getting hardly any vegetables. I suspected neglect in watering or else pilfering, I found my lovely corn, just starting to tassel, destroyed, crushed down into round depressions. Elephants! They trampled more than they ate.

Monkeys are ravaging the eggplants. They, too, destroy far more than they eat: pick, take one bite, throw away. Sarang shot some, hung one up on a pole in the middle of the field; but that did not frighten the others at all. Hopeless, this garden!

The *halias*, however, were frightened over the shooting of monkeys. "Thakurani won't like it!" They are surprised the Goddess of the Forest has not long ago finished Sarang, and me as well. But fear is slowly breaking down. A year ago Sarang could not get them to start any work without first calling some Brahmins and sacrificing a goat to Thakurani. They asked for gifts and sacrifices at each new step. Sarang grew tired. Rice and any operation connected with it is all-important in the peasant's eyes. It is ceremoniously handled at every step. When the first "dinkey"—a foot-worked primitive husking-implement—was ready to be operated, the *halias* claimed that unless sacrifice were first performed and the Thakurani pacified, some great calamity would befall us and the plantation would never prosper. Sarang refused, and he himself did the first husking. No thunderbolt struck him! The men were incredulous, then slowly gained confidence and believed him to be a favorite of the Thakurani. Especially now, since she lets him kill her game and feed the half-starved men. Still— to kill monkeys! Isn't that going too far? "Maybe that is why Memsahib's corn was trampled by elephants!" they surmise.

Maybe! More likely the watchers at Mochapal slept or ran to

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the next village over night, the scamps! Still, it is satisfying to watch prejudice breaking down in the heart of orthodoxy because of Sarang's presence!

February 20.

Dam-building and irrigation work are going on at Mochapal; twenty to thirty men are busy there, on the average. I revert to the desirability of a straight path between it and our houses.

"If each man saves even only half an hour a day ..." I start.

"We simply haven't the time to think of that now," Sarang answers.

"Well, then, just give me two men only, for two hours today, and I'll mark the path; then you can have it cleared whenever you have time and men."

I've heard firing at Mochapal when I was at the Brahmakunda houses so often now that I am sure of my direction although we have no compass. I've also investigated up and down the river at Mochapal.

"Just over there where beasts drink at night, bullock carts can make the grade, and on this side we can slope the embankment. Do give me the men!"

"All right, take two men," Sarang laughs. With a thrill I call Bulu, take the gun, two men with axes, and go off, without a doubt in my mind but that my plan would work. No one knows what lies in this stretch of jungle between Mochapal and Brahmakunda. At the river's edge the land is cut by ravines and slopes abruptly. I stand with my back to Mochapal, my face squarely in the direction of the Brahmakunda houses, and seek for a tree straight ahead. My idea is never to turn off this straight line, keeping to it by marks the men are to cut with their axes on both the Mochapal and Brahmakunda side of the trees. One or two steps to the side brings two separate marks behind me into view; when I step back so that the farther mark disappears behind the first, and face squarely forward in a direct line, I know my direction is true.

Sarang has given me his two best men. They have no idea what I

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am up to but are very curious and catch on quickly and eagerly. As I have to march on ahead to my next selected tree, while they do the cutting, I am sometimes out of their sight, for, while never taking eye off my particular selected high tree, I have to slip in and out among the smaller trees and undergrowth. Not easy going, by any means. There is also a strange mixture of fear and delight in never knowing what may lurk near. I keep Bulu and the gun very close to me!

Shortly after leaving the river's edge, trees grow rarer, and we come out into a large straggling clearing with uneven ground. On the farther side it slopes up. To my amazement I find, on top of a tiny knoll, big stones piled up in the shape of a half-sphere, cup side up, the outer edge about two feet from the ground. What on earth could this be? Some hunting arrangement? Who could have built it, and when?

Beyond this point, the jungle grows denser, more and more so, although this is the dry season. Here it is much more difficult to select outstanding marks far enough ahead, and keep those behind in view. Maybe some sure inner sense is at work, which my Swiss mountain-training developed in childhood. For just one moment I grow uncertain in this thick jungle, then push on. But that one moment of uncertainty is enough to let a slight error creep in, of which a sixth sense continues to keep me aware.

The heavy gun on my shoulder, the hard going, the sun almost at zenith, was telling insistently. Surely, by now, I ought to be out of the jungle. But not for another ten or fifteen minutes do I see a clearing ahead of me. Then I come out on the edge, with the Brahmakunda buildings in view slightly to my right, instead of directly ahead. These last ten minutes or more have been wasted effort, for I have skirted a dip in our clearing without being aware of it.

I am too tuckered out to go across to our houses over the fallen trees that lie between, but send one of the *halias* for water and string, much, much, much string. I give my directions in pantomime. Bajya brings back water, some string, a rope, a ball of darning wool, not quite understanding my need, but dying with curiosity to see what

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Memsahib is up to. Rested and refreshed, I plunge back, this time from the tip of clearing that jags into the jungle where I had expected to come out. I wanted to correct that error, feeling absolutely sure of the moment it had crept in. To make the going quicker, and planning to let the men do the cutting of marks afterwards, I use the string, unrolling it behind me in fantastic loops, slipping it under branches, laying it over glossy bushes. I grin inwardly when the supply of string is gone and I attach the strand of wool. The men are everlastingly busy retying it when it snaps. My grin turns into a shout when, after a mere few hundred yards, I come out upon our late marks almost at the identical spot where I had deviated. Now my straight line is complete!

This evening I take Sarang back over the marked trail. We have no difficulty in following it. It does my heart good to hear his roar of amusement when we reach my darning wool.

"Well, I'll be damned! Look what this woman is taming the jungle with!"

The raja presented Sarang with two greyhounds, poor things! Being valuable, he did not wish to leave them loose at night. They were tied to the veranda posts of the house. Not more than two yards away from them two supervisors slept on rope cots. One night these men awoke at a noise, and found one of the chained greyhounds in a strangling embrace with a leopard. The other ran away, arriving at Dhenkanal frightfully exhausted with chain dangling.

Another not very eventful day. Two men spent the whole morning spreading the ground inside my leaf-enclosure with a mixture of water, mud, and cowdung. Horripilating? Yes, it seemed so when I read of this process years ago in the United States; but really it makes a smooth, odorless, neat crust, infinitely nicer than mere beaten earth. I recall how Hindus in turn think of our dirty habit of sitting in bathtubs with disgust. So much cleaner, they contend, to keep on pouring fresh water over you in jugfuls.

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This afternoon the men have coated in the same way the rooms which serve as Sarang's office, our dining room and my storeroom.

February 28.

I have just learned that one bullock has a hugely swollen head. An in-growing horn has pierced deep into the cheek. Why on earth was this not attended to weeks ago? We rope and throw the poor beast and the tip of the horn is sawed off. Its inner side was embedded to a depth of one and a half inch. What frightful neglect and unnecessary pain!

I have never yet had time for a close look at the bullocks, for early each morning, while I am busy, they are driven into the enclosure near the house while their shed is being cleaned. From here some are hitched up for plowing or carting, while the rest are taken to graze in the jungle and do not return till nightfall.

The buffalos are used for the hardest work; they are powerful brutes, but their tasks start before daylight as they must end work long before noon: the buffalos are not able to bear the heat, and must be driven into water to cool.

Today the herder says one of the bullocks is no longer following the herd and is causing him trouble. It stands with drooping head without feeding, until it is driven farther. I investigate. The bullock is in a shocking condition, a mere skeleton. The skin is broken over the hipbones, they are so sharp. I have it put into a separate pen, but there is no spare man to tend and feed it. Manohar and I, moved by pity, take turns. We tempt it with fresh-cut lucerne from Mochapal, and give it water. But the first grows over a mile away, the latter is carried from the Brahmakunda. We find the task too heavy after a few days, as there are so many other urgent things to do.

"Kill it; it cannot possibly live," I plead with my husband.

"Impossible. Even I dare not kill cattle. Not a man would remain on the place!"

"Then let us poison it; no one will know."

"I have nothing strong enough!"

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Once more blocked by insurmountable prejudice! All I can do is to grit my teeth, force myself to stay away from the pen, and push the torturing thought of the suffering animal away from me. There is nothing left but to turn it back to the care of the herder, which means no care at all—and leave it to its slow death.

But no sooner do I seem to recover from one shock than the jungle is ready with another. Bulu accompanies me wherever I go. He adores crossing the river to Mochapal, and often remains standing in the water enjoying its coolness, merely head and blissfully blinking eyes raised out of it. One afternoon I hear an agonizing yelping from up the river, and then absolute silence.

"It's Bulu, Bulu," I shout. Manohar dashes towards the river and across the dam, and struggles through the underbrush towards the spot. He has seen from afar the tip of one brown ear sticking out of an agitated circle of water. But before he can clamber down to the river bank, the water is quiet.

But I who wait heart-sore, perceive Bulu limping towards me on this side, one bleeding foreleg dangling where a crocodile's teeth have pierced clean through. How he freed himself is a mystery, but there is no mystery about why I cannot persuade him again to go into the water.

I have not enough green things for my chickens, that are doing so well. I have discovered they are crazy for chopped-up onions. So today I have planted a bed of them outside my bath-tent. It is a shame to let any water go to waste.

My chickens, although also a great deal of work to me, have been my especial joy. I hoped in time to improve the breed of the whole countryside. I have directed and helped in the building of the henhouse. We dug up a huge white ant-heap in the process, its core like a honeycomb, with millions of larvae—a marvelous feast for the hens.

The moment I reached the plantation, I started new batches, and slid under the eggs I had saved during the trip. So, twenty days after my

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arrival, two adorable snowy chicks were hatched, among a lot of common ones. These two grew to be incredible pets, following me everywhere, clamoring for their share at our meals. Once, when I had just let them out and turned to latch the door, a hawk swooped down to within a few yards of me and carried one off. I watched it in a sick fury in its high flight towards the jungle. For minutes I heard the peep-peep of the little victim floating back to me.

Before the middle of the second month I had the great pleasure of counting almost fifty new chicks hatched under my care, twenty-two of which were pure white, thoroughbred Chittagongs, the rest half-breeds and country chicks. I had segregated the white ones during the first few days under the care of Pet, my huge white hen, in one of the coops that had been built with such care under my supervision. Safe, I thought, from all outside danger. We had no cement, and no stones were available, but the floor had been solidly hammered down, and sand had been brought from the far river's edge in dozens of sacks on the shoulders of the *halias,* returning evenings.

Yet one morning Pet was all alone, pacing her coop in violent agitation, with frantic cluckings. Not a sign of the twenty-two chicks! Not a sign of any disturbance anywhere, until Sarang, who had been called by a *halia,* happened to pick up a small grain basket lying in the corner. Underneath it was a hole, and signs that a Dhaman snake had gorged.

I had adored the little beauties; they were such treasures, such company; I sickened at heart. Oh, what was the use? What was the use of innovations? Of trying to get the better of the jungle when there were insufficient means to do it properly! Just for the lack of a bit of cement, all my work and joy ruined! Better revert to the ancient rut!

March 2.

I am occupied every minute from daybreak until sunset, except for a weary nap at noon. By seven A. M. I have already washed,

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dressed, fed my chickens, and eaten breakfast. By eight at night, at the earliest, we are through. After the first few weeks I was often in the saddle by half past seven or earlier, to help in the making of wooden sluices for irrigation—for by that time I was the only carpenter left on the place—or to direct some gang of men in making irrigation ditches for the cane that is to be planted at Mochapal.

I adore labor with my hands (except sweeping and dishwashing!) and have a natural knack for moulding, shaping and planning. Much of my Swiss background of self-help, self-reliance and careful training of hands shows in this, and possibly some natural talent in inventiveness. In this lay the greatest difference between me and all the other humans surrounding me. Although his stay in the States had taught Sarang respect for manual labor, yet his training, his ancestry and childhood surroundings held nothing of helpfulness for practical hand-work. Manohar was even far more clumsy and helpless. The *halias* and coolies knew no other use of hands except for the most limited agricultural work; craftspeople, such as carpenters, knew just one simple routine, and could and would turn their hand to nothing else.

It is in this lack of adaptability and inventiveness that lies the most dreadful disadvantage of caste, which restricts persons to limited work. It also prevents them from working coordinately in other ways. For instance, one day I was with a gang of twenty men at my irrigation work. I had found a marvelous fallen tree, naturally hollowed. Only a bit of chopping was needed to give me just the very thing to connect the first wooden sluices, which lay on a built-up earthen ridge, with the platform above the river, where the men raised the water in buckets. This tree, lying on wooden trestles, would not warp as my board-sluices would in the broiling sun. It was a godsend in a great difficulty.

This was during the few days when Sarang was busy directing from forty to sixty village coolies in rush work on the building and thatching of fourteen new houses for the *halias* to live in, work for which I had not language enough. So I had eagerly volunteered for

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this irrigation work, for we were fearfully late in getting our canefields started. Now I was reveling in the idea of this tree-trunk solution which would save me days. I was bursting to tell Sarang that tomorrow water would flow into our fields. After lunch I called the men together to come and get the tree trunk and put it in place. About a dozen came, making the most awkward starts. No idea of coordinated work — and I was handicapped by language in directing them. At last I got enough poles under the trunk, and stout ropes slung from these by which to haul. But much patience and many starts were needed to make the group realize that they must all begin at once. I counted: *Ek, do, teen* — JAO!" At last they understood, with great grins, and the tree swung free. But it proved too heavy; those men starved from childhood are so weak.

Then only did I call upon seven remaining men, who were still busy with digging ditches. They came up, but would not join. It took me some time to realize that I could not get them to help because they were untouchables, and the men already busy with the tree were caste people. There would not have been any need for bodily contact between caste and outcaste in this job, but they would not even touch hands to the same tree-trunk.

In my irritation over being balked, I would often forget to blame the system, and blame the men instead. At such times I also had no patience with their habit of dropping work every half hour or so to squat for a long smoke from the hookah. Sometimes I called them back to their task.

Just before leaving the plantation, Sarang's nephew Narottam, who, simple villager himself, was much nearer to the *halias* than Sarang and knew more of their thoughts, had given a warning: "The *halias* are uneasy. They say, 'Memsahib herself works like four men; so we, too, must keep up, or we are shamed. But we like our old ways better.'"

Such incidents and problems, coupled with hard work and the increasing heat of approaching summer, tend to make me discouraged and uncertain. There is so much to do. I do so want to help; Sarang

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simply cannot be everywhere at once, and has no capable assistants. Yet I can do so little and much of what I do proves hurtful instead of helpful. I begin to feel more and more helpless, frustrated, depressed. There comes a clutching at my heart, a wild sort of despairing love for the plantation, a great appreciation for the work, and grief over the isolation of my husband.

If only Sarang could have a trained, efficient helper of his own race, instead of foreign me! He needs an assistant far more than a wife. I seem to be trying to fill, and to be failing, in both these jobs!

How much more effective, how much more comforting a wife of his own race would be here in the jungle! She could bear the heat; she would understand the people. She would probably be able to induce the wives of the *halias* to come and live here; she could help the sick without letting it encroach on Sarang's time and strength. All these simple people, who are puzzled and uncertain because of my foreignness, would grow confident.

I mention all this—not for the first time—to Sarang. He meets it, as usual, with impatience, mingled with hurt: "As if any Hindu girl would or could do a tenth of what you do! Moreover, no Hindu girl of the type you have in mind would come and live in the jungle. Even my *halias* women won't! And no matter what happened, if you went, I would never marry again!" I laugh: "Oh, she'd be the wife for everyday! I'd remain the Sunday and hunting wife!"

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

My most serious difficulty came when our cook left. Bajya and he had been at loggerheads since the beginning. Moreover the cook hated the isolation of the jungle; except for one overseer, he was the only Mohammedan on the place, and was merely watching for an opportunity to get away. He neglected his work, felt himself indispensable, grew exacting and insolent. He had attacks of fever which he exaggerated and prolonged into holidays beyond all endurance. In a temper, Sarang, with my approval, told him to clear out.

Not until I had stood a few times over the open wood-fire in the scorching heat of noonday did I realize that I might just as well have left with the cook!

Bajya's other tasks were too varied to give him time enough to do much cooking for us. But I myself soon found it physically impossible to stay near the fire. I tried the scheme of getting everything ready and then letting Bajya watch the final cooking— this meant that other tasks of his had perforce to be neglected. Sarang's horse, for instance. In that region, a horse, too, is considered untouchable. Not one of our *halias,* no matter of how low a caste, would care for it. Its stable would remain uncleaned for weeks at a time. Even faithful Bajya did not dare to be seen removing manure, though out of devotion to Sarang he fed, watered, and saddled the horse.

At rare intervals the stable, somehow, would be found a bit cleaned up, manure thrown outside, or at least piled high into one corner. I do not know how the *halias* explained that fact to them selves, for it was never done when a single one of them was present. With Bajya we did not speak of it, unless looks told a story. For every now and then, after a new cleaning, his face would wear a specially guilty but shining look. And once or twice I myself also dropped the broom at the sudden approach of steps, for I did not dare make more trouble for Sarang by being caught.

There were days, however, when the horse, for actual lack of time, was not taken for watering until the afternoon, despite the

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withering heat. No wonder the poor beast began to droop.

So, to give Bajya more time, I dropped cooking at noon entirely, managing somehow with cold things, though that was getting more and more difficult, as our Calcutta stores were nearing exhaustion, and we had no intention of renewing them after this one house-warming splurge of celebration. It cost too much. We were having to rely more and more on rice, dal, and our few vegetables, all of which required cooking. We did not have even milk. The bullock herder could not and would not take care of a cow. He had no time. An extra man would be needed. Still, for one month we did get a cow, which was brought all the way from Dhenkanal. As there was no green feed for her, and as she was unbroken, we were not able to get even one pint of milk from her per day. She with her calf was an endless source of useless worry in feeding and watering—and we took the first opportunity of getting rid of her again, absurd as it sounds. I could never at a distance have been able to credit these conditions, but now I knew them to be facts.

Summer heat was creeping over us; cooking became still more of a torture. I resorted at last to doing almost no other cooking than what could be done in an "Icmic cooker," a sort of steam cooker with four tightly fitting superimposed pots.

But then there was the difficulty of dishes. At Cuttack, where I had first met Sarang's servant Bajya, who traveled with him, he had without a murmur done every kind of service for me. None of his caste people were near to see and persecute him for it. But here on the plantation, where my need for his unreserved help was a hundred times greater, I found him demurring over a number of tasks. Appealing to Sarang against me, Sarang would support him. They were both perfectly right and wise in their course of action, correctly estimating loss and gain: Bajya could not risk it. Yet, before I could be made to understand in each instance, there would be irritation and hurt feelings on my part, and often on Sarang's; and Bajya, who adored us both, would try to efface himself with the hurt look of a faithful whipped dog.

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Bajya would not wash my dishes; on the whole plantation or in the surrounding villages there was not a soul to be found who would do so. I had to do it myself, Sarang often helping despite his own great pressure of time. It was the sooty pots and pans against which I formed a special enmity.

By chance, once, I had run away from them in hot disgust, for the scouring left me as sopping wet with perspiration as a dish-rag—I found that faithful Bajya did after all attend to them on the sly that day, no doubt when all *balias* happened to be away from the buildings.

From then on I took an unfair advantage of the discovery, though I could actually hardly do otherwise, for I was trying my own strength to the utmost. I left the pots to take care of themselves, which somehow, thanks to that marvelous boy, Bajya, they managed to do.

Accumulatively, things came to a crisis.

One day Sarang's brother came with a young, useless servant boy, but bringing no cook. It was his first visit to the plantation and meant double work for Bajya, who was expected to do his cooking. I was uncertain what I could do to offer hospitality under the caste restrictions limiting him, yet did not want to be remiss. I thought that here in the wilderness the brother might consider himself far enough away from his own accusing caste-members to risk sharing our food—if he had no inner objections on the grounds of religious convictions. By now I knew India well enough to feel sure that eight-tenths of all upholding of caste is pure fear and hypocrisy. So I offered to cook a joint meal for the three of us. Sarang told his brother, and I understood it was accepted.

Despite the heat, I prepared an especially nice supper that night, and set the table for three with great care. Then I told Bajya to inform his master. Sarang alone came.

"What, where is your brother?"

"In the other room."

"Isn't he coming?"

"Coming? No. Bajya will take him in his supper from here."

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I was incensed at what I took for a sudden whim, an unaccountable change of plans after all my special effort. I did not realize that I was laboring under a misapprehension. I thought the brother had agreed actually to dine with us, while he had merely meant to eat the food I had prepared, but eat it by himself. Even in this, he had gone farther toward ignoring caste than ever before in his life. Wanting to eat it by himself in his own room was out of fear that his own servant would carry tales to Dhenkanal should he be seen eating with me. Sarang, too, thought I had fully understood. Had that been the case, I should never have made the following remark, which in my impatience I threw out:

"What does he mean? Does he think I am his cook?"

Sarang in his turn flared up. It ended by my withdrawing to the tent at once, supperless. Nor did Sarang touch any food. Not till next day was the misunderstanding cleared up. Still, it rankled; I could not help feeling that all this caste business was too silly.

That morning I discovered that the back poles of my tent were again solidly covered with white ants. I spent two hours cleaning and safeguarding. Consequently I reached the house very late, not until almost noon. The first thing I learned was that a man had been brought from many miles distant on a bullock cart with a most frightful festering foot. Sarang had sent him away, telling him to go to the hospital, or to the nearest *Kabiraj*.

"Oh, how could you?" I exclaimed, "I might at least have been able to do some little thing." It was a terrible shock for me to think of anyone being turned away hopelessly from my door.

"You were not here and it is simply a physical impossibility for me to give the time! Moreover, the case was hopeless. I am sure it was gangrened. The fool should have gone to town ages ago. We've got to call a halt."

I have a bit of knowledge of nursing, medical treatment, and have a lucky hand. The number of sick who came for help had grown larger day by day. Several hours each morning had to be

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given up to treatment, and I was constantly asking Sarang to translate, if he were still near, delaying his getting down to plantation tasks. It was growing to be too much of a strain on him. Sarang had more than he could do. He had already before this sent some cases away when I happened to be absent from the houses, instead of having me called. I knew there was no help for it. But this was all so very, so hopelessly, different from what I had planned and imagined formerly. Helpless, helpless, torn by misery we could not stem; hands tied by lack of money, by lack of efficient help!

Without another word I went to the kitchen. There were the pots, unwashed, on this of all mornings, when I was already so late. 1 did not know that the water-boy had run away, and that poor Bajya had had to fetch all the water for baths and housekeeping himself. My mind was in a turmoil. I called him and turned on him without reflection. "Wash these pots!"

Embarrassed, he turned away, without replying. As he did not come back, I went up to the house, and found him with Sarang.

Sarang turned to me at once, from which I gathered that Bajya had been complaining. Unreasonably, this angered me.

"He cannot wash the pots with my brother's servant hanging about, and you know it!"

"My God! My God!" I exclaimed, with a desperate clutch at control. A sudden hate against the jungle passed hotly through me. I did not trust myself to speak, but fairly ran to my tent.

I sat there, blindly staring, washed back and forth in a dull sea of misery. I couldn't think any more. There was just simply nothing to be said or thought, just no earthly way out, nothing to be done. An unscalable blind wall ahead of me of unrealizable good intentions, of a knowledge of life as it should be, but was not, and could not be—and behind me the pitilessness of the jungle, the yawning poverty and misery, the heavy chains of outworn custom.

O God, if only there were money, money! Then life might be made bearable. If we had money, then we could pay high enough wages to induce cooks to come from outside the state, men who would not be

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affected by local caste fears and restrictions. Even if none of them would endure the god-forsaken isolation for long, big wages might tempt new ones again. Would it? Oh, what was the use trying to think? Even if there were money available to pay high wages, each time that one of them left, letters would have to go to friends outside, to engage another and send him here—in itself so difficult. Weeks of delay and fuss!

Overhead the sun was beating mercilessly on the dry leaves of the roof. There was in those leaves an endless whispering that bored into the brain. When first I had become aware of it, a week or so after my arrival, I had looked up in pleased surprise: rain! Cool blessed rain at this time of the year? I had rushed to the door of the leaf-tent only to find the same unclouded luminous expanse of sky above me. Then it was I discovered the curious pattering to come from countless insects nibbling in the leaves of my enclosure.

At last this unceasing noise had become symbolic in my ears of the pitiless march of destruction of the jungle against our puny endeavor. The heat was unbearable in the tent. I dragged myself up, came out and slumped down in the steamer chair. Here the crisp whispering in the leaves was more insistently audible. My head began to throb as if in a vise of red-hot copper. Suddenly the fancy shot through me that the nibbling among the leaves was the endless soft pattering of bare feet on smooth-beaten earth paths that led up to my door in expectant hope, then, turned away, wearily dragged themselves off, wearily, wearily. Yes, that was what the pattering repeated, human feet dragging themselves wearily, wearily, wearily. Feet with deep, red-hot spurting gashes such as the one I had tended, feet greenish-yellow with hopeless sores, bodies covered with scabs, bodies burning with fever, eyes covered with white film that made the night of the jungle more dreadful, empty eye-socket and cheek gashed to the bone where the claws of a beast had torn through—oh! If only I did not care, did not feel it so! If only my cursed imagination did not with shuddering vividness flash the pictures back

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before my eyes whenever I felt most depressed, and most in need of cheering myself. If only I could do more!

The feeling that my presence was needed had kept me going. And now there was to be no more of even the bit of relief that I had been able to give. Sarang's part in this was breaking him; he simply could not give the time, did not have the energy.

Through those who had been turned away, word must already have spread to some of the villages, for the stream of sick and ailing had been thinning the last week. "Memsahib won't give any more medicine."

"Babu says we must go to the hospital in the faraway town— how can we? Woe!"

Feet pattering away from my door, wearily, wearily! Money, money! If we had money, I *knew* I could find some among the young enthusiasts to come and help me, so as to leave my husband to his own work of the plantation routine. Someone with education, someone who spoke the language. And we could have a house cool enough to shelter me. Cool! What a blessed word!

Cool! The soothing motherly tenderness of the word. Cool! I was too weary even to get up and go over to the earthen water-jug, though my throat ached with dryness. I kept on lying in a dull torpor in my steamer chair, arms hanging outwards, feet and legs apart, for the contact of my very body, sweat-soaked limb with limb, was unbearable in this heat.

I had heard no approach. Suddenly beside my chair spoke a hesitating, low voice:

"Memsahib, khana tyar hai!"

It was Bajya's voice, timid, pleading.

So he had made lunch ready; though refusing to wash the pots! But I was still too hurt, so did not even look up at Bajya, nor did I answer. There was absolute silence for a while. Then still more timidly he said:

"Let me bring Memsahib's food!"

I shook my head, silently. But I was touched a bit. Poor Bajya— he had enough to do without carrying trays for me!

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There—softening already! What a wishy-washy fool I was! No backbone! Even a servant with a bit of wheedling could twist me around his finger. And things would drop back into a deeper slough than before, since Memsahib was so easy.

I steeled myself to continued silence, and motioned him away with a gesture of my hand, never looking at him. Then I waited for the patter of his departing feet. But the silence was unbroken.

My head was throbbing. Time passed. Then there was Bajya's voice again, trembling:

"Sahib has not eaten!"

That shook me; Sarang, body-weary, mind-weary, needed his food, especially as he had not eaten the night before either. Was I here to hurt him even physically? I turned to look at Bajya. Suddenly, with a cry and sobbing like a child, he threw himself at my feet, in full prostration, hands with joined palms stretched out towards me on the ground, his head in the dust.

"Memsahib, Memsahib, beat me, kill me, but speak to me! I will never again refuse. I will do whatever you say! Whatever you say!"

Appalled, I jumped up, bent over him, and pulled him up.

"Bajya, Bajya, don't! Don't!"

He looked at me, his face twisted with grief, eyes streaming.

"Bajya, go tell sahib to start eating; I am coming!"

A smile shot up in the wet pools of those deep faithful eyes, he turned in a flash and was gone. Gone, I knew, to urge Sarang to eat. For a year and a half now he had tended his master with dog-like devotion, dragging off his boots when Sarang was overweary, cooking his food, preparing his bath, cooling Sarang's head and actually holding his hand when Master lay in the desolate isolation of high fever. Then, when the spell was over, he would, although himself ready to drop with weariness from the nursing, massage his master's fever-sore limbs. Faithful Bajya!

When I reached the house a while later, Sarang had not yet touched his food. He sat slumped down on a stool, his head buried in his hands. As I entered, he got up heavily and came towards me. His

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eyes were full of grief.

"Bajya is all cut up. He is overworked and won't be able to stand this. I am afraid he may leave."

I met Sarang's eyes in silence, deeply moved.

I put out my hand, "Come, and eat first," I said gently, drawing him toward the table.

"Wait," he said, very gravely, detaining me. "You must understand this, Frieda!" His voice was laboring. "Frieda, it is impossible for me to manage without Bajya! You must go slow! I don't know what we will do! I can live in the jungle without you, but I cannot live here without Bajya!"

Sarang's eyes filled as he saw my pain at the blow. He suddenly threw himself with raking sobs on the hard narrow board that served as bench.

I stood stock-still, taking in what I knew to be the absolute stark truth: I, the white wife, less helpful and less needed than a servant!

Sarang had not said this with any intention of wounding; the jungle had forced it out of him! An overwhelming pity for us both shot through my pain. This was the end—beyond our willing, beyond our control!

Unspoken, the knowledge lay between us: We could not bend the jungle to the purpose of our joint life; it was the end!

Great understanding there had always been between us; great friendship there would always remain. And a still greater tenderness brooded over the jungle during the remaining weeks!

Sarang, son of the soil, would stay. I ached over the knowledge of the lonesomeness that would be his in the jungle, the relentless, unremitting toil, whose main fruit would not ripen within his lifetime. But it was great work, this bending of the jungle to cradle homes; and Sarang would grow to the stature of its greatness along with it. Great success, or great failure, who could tell? Great in the trying, either way!

I, alien lover of the jungle, had to go! The failure of the white skin in the tropics; the jungle does not take us to its heart!

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Before I left, mine was the searing joy of planting the first seedlings of cane in the new-turned fields of our "Sugar King," knowing my eyes would never see their growth.

I rode away from the plantation one morning at dawn when the peacocks were encircling our scarred plain with their harsh shrilling. Long after our little straw-thatched village was lost to sight, the heart-rending howling of my dogs still reached me through the enfolding trees. But the jungle knew of a grief too deep for tongue!

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GLOSSARY

anna—a copper coin, sixteen in one rupee; worth about two cents.
Arjuna—a hero from the epics, famous for beauty, bravery, and archery.
ashram—a retreat devoted to social or religious purposes.
ayah—a female servant.
band-gharri—a closed carriage that insures seclusion to women.
bandhuli—a flower with lovely petals that resemble the curve of beautiful lips.
banyan—a tree with aerial roots, sacred to Hindus.
begum—a Mohammedan great lady or queen.
bulbul—the nightingale.
burra memsahib—"great lady."
caste—Hindu society is divided into four main castes: Brahmin, Kshatria, Vaishya, and Sudra: priest, warrior, merchant, laborer.
champa—a flowering tree with star-shaped, waxy blossoms.
chaprasi—an office servant or watchman.
charka—a spinning wheel. *chela*—a pupil.
Chittagong—a white chicken, like leghorn; also name of a town.
chota-hazri—early breakfast.
corolla—a green spindle-shaped vegetable with large seeds, very bitter.
dak-bungalow—a government-erected building for use of all travelers.
dal—a pulse, similar to dried yellow peas.
darshan—a beholding, a blessed sight of someone or something.
dhania—a spice akin to anise.
dhobie—a washerman.
dhotie—piece of cloth about 2½ x 1/¼ yards, worn in many fashions by men to cover the lower part of the body.
durrie—a woven cotton floor-mat.
ekka—a two-wheeled springless tiny cart, without seats.
gharri—a carriage. *ghee*—clarified butter.
godown—a storeroom.
gold-mohur—a coin from Moghul times, after which the tree takes it name.
gunda—an untouchable, below the four castes.
haldi—a yellow root used to spice food, but also in paste-form as cosmetic.
halia—a bonded laborer.
Hari—god.
Hindustani—a dialect of North India deriving from Sanskrit.
haloa—a sweet made of wheat, butter and sugar.
Id—the greatest Mohammedan religious festival.

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kabiraj—an Indian herb doctor.
karma—the theory of inevitable cause and effect of all human thought and action, implying re-incarnation as the main factor.
khaddar—homespun cotton cloth, symbol of Gandhi's movement.
khanjana—a black bird of graceful lines and bright movements.
khansama—a Mohammedan cook.
kulti—a grain fed to horses.
Lakshmi—Hindu goddess of fortune.
luchi—a form of unleavened bread made of fine wheat and fried in deep butter.
ma-bap—"mother-father."
machan—a scaffolding in tree, serving as a platform for hunter or watchman.
maidan—a commons, park. *mana*—a measure for grain. *memsahib*—"lady."
mlechche—"dirty foreigner"; applied to all non-Hindus.
nawab—a Mohammedan ruler or great lord.
neem-tree—medicinal qualities are ascribed to its leaves and believed carried by the breezes that blow through its branches.
Oriah—pertaining to the province of Orissa; an inhabitant of Orissa; the language.
outcaste—ostracized from one of the castes.
palanquin—an enclosed conveyance carried on the shoulders of bearers. *pallah*—a leaf hiding-place on level ground for hunters.
pan—the leaf of a shrub, into which many condiments are folded, eaten as a dainty.
peon—an attendant, or messenger.
praeshchita—purification ceremony, involving feasts and expensive presents to Brahmins.
pranam—the Hindu form of greeting: hands raised before face, palms touching.
punkah—a fan; ceiling punkahs stretch the whole length of a room and are pulled by a rope from the outside.
purdah—a veil or curtain.
raj—a kingdom.
rossogullah—a sweet in ball-shape, made of curds, fried, then dipped in syrup.
rupee—a silver coin, thirty-three cents in value.
sadhu—a religious ascetic.
sahib—"master, lord."
sais—a groom.
sal—a hardwood tree.
sambar—an antelope.
sandesh—a Bengali sweet made of curds.

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sanyasini— feminine form of *sanyasi*, religious ascetic.
sari—a strip of cloth five to ten yards long, one and one-quarter wide, with embroidered or woven borders, the main garment of the women of India.
sepoy—a soldier.
shag—a vegetable similar to spinach.
sharbat—a cooling drink; "sherbet" is a corruption of this.
surma—a black mineral powder used to stain the edges of eyelids.
sesame—an oil seed.
tamarind—a large tree whose bean-shaped fruit is kneaded and stored away, sour in taste.
tamasha—a show, festival.
tonga—a two-wheeled carriage with springs and awning, seats facing sideways.
thakurani— goddess.
untouchable—below caste, whose touch brings pollution to caste people. *yoga*—a system of religious instruction.
zamindar—a landowner.
zenana—the secluded women's quarters.

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Sketch of Gandhi by Frieda Hauswirth Das

Frieda Hauswirth Das

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Frieda Hauswirth Das's *A Marriage to India*, published in 1930, stands out from amongst the crop of books written by Westerners on colonial India in two main ways: one, by not seeking to "inscribe" India, and, two, by turning the spot light on Orissa, a much neglected region that had suffered the worst excesses of the colonial administration: physical dismemberment, apathy and exploitation. The "marriage" in the book's title is both literal and metaphorical. It refers to the Swiss American Frieda Hauswirth's marriage with a student from Orissa, Sarangadhar Das, whom she met in California in the early decades of the twentieth century. So it is both her emotional logbook as well as a record of her cross-cultural encounter. The book recounts the story of a romance gone sour in the tropics, on one hand. But, on the other, it throws a flood of revealing light on the slow 'social ferment' that was brewing in India and Orissa during the 1920s and on actors such as Gandhi, Tagore and Bose involved in that social drama.

Thus the book is at once a personal memoir and a historical document. In *The Times Literary Supplement* (1931) the reviewer fittingly wrote: "... it is an engrossing tale; and on the quiet dignity of the telling there is some imprint of genius."

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